Political Education In Canada

edited by
Jon H. Pammett & Jean-Luc Pepin

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Foreword

In the preface to this volume, the editors suggest that political education has been a neglected subject in Canada, both in theory and in practice. They note that this book itself may well be the first entirely dedicated to this subject in this country and they express the hope that it may stimulate further analysis and discussion. That was, of course, the goal of the Institute for Research on Public Policy in organizing the February 1987 seminar on political education, and is still our goal in bringing out this publication for wider distribution.

The role of institutes and "think tanks" themselves came in for a little discussion at the seminar. The merits of different approaches can be argued. A "bureaucratic" approach of influence by rational stealth based on the three R's of research, reason and roundtables, with the hope that ideas will sell themselves through osmosis, and a "political approach" based on the three P's of provocation, promotion and press conferences, with the hope that ideas will be adopted as pressures build, can both find intelligent supporters. There is, consequently, a constant tension within "think tanks", as participants in a process of political education, between their images of themselves as agents, activists and advocates of political change, and their responsibilities as objective analysts of it. At the end of the debate, however, there is usually a minimum consensus on the major role of "think tanks" as being to promote the spread of new ideas, to animate the awareness of a changing environment, and to heighten individual sensitivities to emerging problems.

One of the most fundamental of such problems of contemporary public policy is the need to come to grips with the rules, structures and functioning of government itself. It is for this reason that the Institute has elected to concentrate a significant portion of its research effort in work not only on contemporary questions of constitutional change and government roles in the economy, but also on organizational structures and management in the public service, particularly the changing values and ethical foundations on which management's actions are based. Though the notion of broad public participation in the processes of government is now deep-rooted, concerns today surround the nature and consequences of such participation, constrained as it is inter alia by the selective influence of powerful media and the active intervention of powerful interest groups.

Where do we form our expectations as to our own opportunities for participation and influence in public affairs and government in Canada? How well or badly prepared are we to exploit those opportunities and exercise our responsibilities in those processes? How well does the system function overall, and how far might its failings be attributed to weaknesses in the process of political education in this country? These are some of the questions the February 1987 meeting and the present volume were designed to address.

It is a matter of great personal satisfaction that this Institute has been fortunate enough to bring together, for purposes of this project, an outstanding political scientist from an earlier academic generation who set off on a twenty-year field trip into the deepest jungles of the House of Commons before returning, as a widely-honoured Canadian statesman, to his academic homeland, and a distinguished younger author of many influential contributions to the contemporary literature on the political processes in Canada. The Honorable Jean-Luc Pepin had this project very much in mind when he accepted our invitation to become a Fellow-in-Residence with this Institute, and he worked hard to assemble the necessary financial resources as well as to bring together a balanced group of participants. The Institute acknowledges with deep gratitude the financial support of a number of sponsors identified in the editors' preface. We owe thanks also to Professor John Langford, formerly Director of the Institute's research program on "problems on governability" for help and advice in the initial organization of the project, especially the introduction to it of Professor Jon Pammett as participant and co-editor.

At the Institute we all feel deeply about the importance of the subject matter whose surface is scratched with this volume; we all hope that it will serve to stimulate further discussion and further research.

Rod Dobell, President March 1988

Avant-propos

Dans la préface de ce volume, les éditeurs expriment l'opinion que l'éducation politique a été un sujet négligé au Canada, tant du point de vue théorique que pratique. Ils ajoutent que ce livre même est peut-être bien le premier de son genre, en ce pays, à être entièrement consacré à ce sujet, et ils émettent le voeu qu'il puisse stimuler la poursuite de l'analyse et de la discussion dans ce sens. C'est, bien entendu, ce que l'Institut de recherches politiques avait en vue en organisant, en février 1987, un colloque sur le thème de l'éducation en matière politique, et c'est encore le même but qu'il poursuit en publiant cet ouvrage destiné au grand public.

Le rôle des instituts et des "groupes de réflexion" a d'ailleurs fait l'objet d'un échange de vues au cours du colloque. Les mérites respectifs des différentes méthodes d'éducation en matière de politique peuvent prêter à discussion. Pourtant, il existe deux approches qui peuvent compter sur des partisans intelligents : la méthode "bureaucratique" d'une part, qui cherche à influencer indirectement et d'une manière rationnelle, en suivant les trois étapes traditionnelles : recherche, raisonnement, tables rondes, dans l'espoir que les idées s'imposeront d'elles-mêmes, par osmose; la méthode "politique" d'autre part, articulée sur le dynamisme des trois P : provocation par les idées, publicité, presse, qui vise à imposer ses vues au moyen de l'insistance. Il existe par conséquent une tension constante, dans les "groupes de réflexion", entre l'image que les membres se font d'eux-mêmes comme agents, activistes et avocats

préconisant un changement politique, et le devoir d'objectivité qui leur incombe en tant qu'analystes professionnels de ce même phénomène. Toutefois, un consensus minimum finit également par s'imposer à la fin des débats, quant au rôle principal des "groupes de réflexion", qui est de promouvoir la diffusion des idées nouvelles, de faire prendre conscience des changements en cours et de stimuler la sensibilité des individus aux problèmes nouveaux.

L'un des problèmes fondamentaux qui se posent en matière de politique contemporaine est celui de la maîtrise des règlements, des structures et des activités de fonctionnement du gouvernement lui-même. C'est pour cette raison que l'Institut a décidé de consacrer une part importante de ses efforts de recherche non seulement à l'examen des questions actuelles de changement constitutionnel et du rôle des gouvernements en économie, mais encore à celui des structures organisationnelles de la fonction publique et de sa gestion, notamment en ce qui concerne les transformations dans les valeurs fondamentales et l'éthique servant de base à la conduite des activités du secteur public. Bien que la notion au sens large de la participation du public aux activités du gouvernement soit maintenant bien établie, elle n'est cependant pas sans donner lieu à des inquiétudes, étant donné les restrictions de fait apportées par l'influence prépondérante exercée par les médias et l'intervention de puissants groupes d'intérêts.

En quelles circonstances formons-nous nos espoirs quant à nos chances de participer aux affaires publiques et aux activités gouvernementales du Canada, et de les influencer? Sommes-nous prêts à profiter de ces occasions et à exercer nos responsabilités? Le système fonctionne-t-il d'une manière satisfaisante, dans son ensemble, et dans quelle mesure peut-on attribuer ses faiblesses à un manque d'éducation politique au Canada? Voilà quelques-unes des questions auxquelles le colloque de février 1987 et le présent volume ont tenté de répondre.

C'est pour l'Institut un sujet de grande satisfaction d'avoir été assez fortuné pour s'assurer, à cette occasion, le concours d'un spécialiste de sciences politiques de grand renom, formé à la vieille école, et qui a passé une vingtaine d'années aventureuses dans la jungle profonde de la Chambre des communes avant de réintégrer, sous les traits d'un homme d'état honoré de tous, sa patrie académique, et celui d'un auteur distingué d'une autre génération, qui s'est fait remarquer par ses nombreux et importants travaux dans le domaine des études politiques au Canada. L'Honorable Jean-Luc Pépin avait déjà ce projet bien en tête lorsqu'il accepta notre invitation à devenir chercheur émérite et invité de l'Institut. Il a, par la suite, travaillé avec ténacité à la réunion des fonds nécessaires à sa réalisation et à la constitution d'un groupe équilibré de participants.

L'institut désire exprimer ici sa vive gratitude à l'égard de ceux qui ont bien voulu l'aider financièrement et dont les noms figurent dans la préface des éditeurs. Nous tenons également à remercier le professeur John Langford, ancien directeur du programme de recherche de l'Institut sur "les problèmes qui ont trait à la capacité de gouverner", pour son aide et ses conseils au stade initial de l'organisation du projet, et spécialement pour y avoir invité le professeur Jon Pammett en tant que participant et co-éditeur.

Nous tous, à l'Institut, sommes intimement convaincus de l'importance du sujet qui est abordé dans ce volume; nous espérons vivement que celui-ci saura susciter des commentaires et inciter à poursuivre la recherche.

Rod Dobell, président

Mars 1988

Preface

Political education has been a neglected subject in Canada, both in theory and practice. Academic writing scarcely mentions it, preferring to deal with the way the political socialization process transmits and perpetuates the political culture. (Chapter 2) And judging by the indictments delivered by many of the contributors to this volume, hardly anybody practices it, at least to a satisfactory extent.

The schools, in particular, we are told, do an inadequate job of teaching a basic understanding of the complexities of the Canadian political world – but they are not the only culprits. The mass media do not have the resources or the expertise to educate the public, even though they might wish to, and the politicians and political parties, who might very well have the resources and expertise, find that it is often not in their own interest to educate the public. Lobby groups "educate" all the time, but the information they purvey is so self-serving that it is discounted by much of the public.

What is political education? Our authors in this volume were not working to a common formal definition, but they have centered on the *content* of the politically-relevant things that people learn (or don't learn). Political education is the teaching and the learning, in formal and informal ways, by numerous agents, of the knowledge and skills necessary to an understanding of the political process. It can also involve the teaching and the learning of attitudes and beliefs important for political participation. As pointed out in Chapter 1,

political education can involve elements of indoctrination as well as englightenment. Most agents of political education would profess to be engaging in the latter, but their critics at times charge the opposite.

This volume has its origins in a Conference on Political Education in Canada organized in February, 1987 under the auspices of the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Institute Fellow Jean-Luc Pepin brought together a wide array of participants from academia, government, journalism, business and the professions for a memorable two-day meeting. The *chapters* in this book are papers, in some cases revised, originally presented at the conference. In addition, some of the discussion, reactions and spontaneous presentations which took place at the conference have been retained here in the form of edited *commentaries*.

Although not all participants felt that the current state of Canadian political education represented a problem (see for example Chapter 3), the majority were very concerned. Judgements in this book range from "not satisfactory" (Chapter 8) to "apalling" (Chapter 12). Low as the public information level is about many domestic political issues, knowledge about international affairs, it is suggested here, is lower (Chapters 5, 3). Even the polling experts,who argue that the public has a canny ability to choose its leaders wisely, note that detailed knowledge about policy issues is absent (Chapter 3).

Most participants believed that the Canadian school system bears much of the responsibility for the present state of affairs. At the secondary school level, regardless of the region of the country being considered, students are exposed to little direct teaching about politics (Chapters 6 to 9). While high school curricula at times contain impressive looking courses on politics, these appear to be either infrequently taught or lightly enrolled (Chapters 6, 8). High school teachers are frequently not adequately trained to teach those courses in any case. Even in Western Canada, where courses appear to be more widespread, the teaching style does not generally involve active student involvement. It is characterized here as "preparing students to be passive spectators rather than active participants" (Chapter 9). Nor is the situation much better in the universities. University Departments of Political Science, charges the commentary following Chapter 9, are often unwilling to teach the "civics" they believe incoming students should already have acquired.

The mass media of communication, while immense in their educative potential, have fallen short in actual practice. Various reasons are given, ranging from the entertainment orientation of television, to the local perspective of newspapers, to the paucity of good journalists and the inadequacy of their training (Chapters 10, 11 and subsequent commentaries). The dominance of the Canadian

airwaves by American television programs and stations reduces the amount of Canadian programming available, and the commercial nature of most television leaves little room for altruistic motives of public political education. Education is left to educational television, which reaches a narrower, and already more informed, audience.

Other agents of political education do exist. A case is made by Chapter 12 and ensuing commentaries for the Royal Commission or the Task Force as an educative device. While they may well serve this function, such organizations are expensive and infrequent. They may help, but they cannot be relied upon to carry much of the load.

Indeed, one of the most intractable problems in increasing the supply of political education stems from its "public good" nature. While it may be in the general or national interest that more political education should exist, it is in few people's or institutions' private interest to ensure it (Chapter 16). One does not have to subscribe to the assumption that people act solely from their private self-interest to realize how difficult it is to get major potential agents of political education to act in the general interest. Political parties, for example, act as agents of political education to some degree, but infrequently provide a well-rounded "objective" view of any question. Our parliamentary system of government defines their role as either advocate or opposition on any matter. Furthermore, Canadian political parties are of a brokerage rather than ideological nature. To the extent that they take distinct policy positions, these are rarely based on fundamental societal cleavages. Parties emphasizing distribution and administration are blunted in their responsibility as educators (Chapter 14, 15, and following commentaries).

Elites obviously acquire much more political education than does the mass public, though even here improvement is called for (Chapters 4, 5, following commentary, 15). A common motive, however, behind a concern for improvement in political education is a desire to involve more of the mass public in the decision-making process (Chapters 18, 20). Only if people at large are encouraged to participate, and are provided with opportunities to be genuinely influential, can we expect a rise in public demand for more political information.

The articles in this book provide a variety of recommendations for improving Canadian political education. They may be grouped as follows:

- *The Schools* should develop more and better courses fostering political education; these courses should be required of students; and they should be taught in a manner which encourages active participation.

- *Television* should provide more programming that would directly contribute to political education.

- *Newspapers* should transcend their localism and be encouraged, perhaps by tax advantages, to provide more in-depth political coverage. Journalistic professional training should be improved.

- *Investigatory Commissions* should be regarded as devices for the education and involvement of the public and spared disparaging comment about the reasons for their establishment.

- *Interest groups* should be reminded, particularly by their own members, to extend their commentary on national issues beyond their own self interest.

- *Foundations and Research Institutes* should be encouraged to mount programs of public education.

- *Political Parties* should invest more in political education, both of their own members and of the general public. Policy journals should be established to stimulate debate.

- *Government* should strengthen public access to information and lessen the degree of its secrecy. It should help in the creation or growth of "think tanks" in significant areas of public policy. It should implement institutional reforms to involve a wider range of Canadians in actual decision-making.

All of the above recommendations may be found in one or more of the articles and commentaries which constitute this volume. Of course, not all authors (or perhaps even the editors) would necessarily agree with the feasibility or desirability of all of them. But they all point in the same direction, towards a concerted effort which needs to be made to improve Canadian political education. This book itself, the first on the subject in Canada, will, we hope, contribute to this goal by stimulating thought and discussion. Public goods can be produced if enough members of the public want them to be.

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I
The State of Political Education

Chapter 1:

Political Education and Political Culture

David V.J. Bell

Political education has an immense significance for political theorizing, beginning at least as far back as Plato. His *Republic* is an inquiry into the essential meaning of justice, in which he claims that the achievement of the just society fundamentally rests on extensive political education. However, Plato distinguishes between education for the small but elite "guardian class" of society and education for the masses. This dichotomy captures an ambivalence that the term "political education" conjures up even today. On the one hand, political education can refer to a process of genuine enlightenment, the development of vision and understanding made possible by *leading* an individual or a group *out* of the cave of ignorance. This was the intent of the extensive education to be given to the guardian class, a class limited to those few individuals capable of benefitting from the dazzling brilliance of such education. The masses, on the other hand, should be relegated to a much less profound and more limited education, which could be better termed "indoctrination". The concept of "doxa" or right opinion was central to Plato's discussion of this matter. Whereas the guardian class would be led forth to behold the noble "pure forms" made visible by the brilliant light of the Good, the masses who remained behind in the cave of ignorance would be shown only flickering images of these forms reflected as the shadows cast on the wall of the cave by the inadequate fire of partial comprehension. Instead of reason and knowledge, the masses must be content with illusion or, at best, beliefs which are politically correct (ortho doxy),

although not necessarily "true" (hence Plato's use of the notion of the "noble lie"). In short, political education for the masses is tantamount to indoctrination; only for the elite of society is it true enlightenment.

These themes became enduring issues in political philosophy over the next two millennia. For example, the work of Thomas Hobbes, a pivotal figure in the development of modern bourgeois liberalism, reveals an almost obsessional commitment to political education as indoctrination. However, unlike Plato, Hobbes makes no distinction between the masses and the elite. Everyone in his society will be forced to read and accept the teachings contained in his masterful work *The Leviathan*. All other books about politics (including, of course, *The Republic*) would be banned or even destroyed. Although Hobbes believed that he had discovered the immutable true principles upon which political orders must be founded, he was not so foolish as to assume that these truths would be self evident and thus readily welcomed. Instead, he insisted that they be rigorously, and even brutally, imposed.

The classical political theorists' concern with the problem of political education derives from their recognition that a supportive system of values and beliefs is integral to the proper functioning of any particular set of political institutions. This concern has remained central to contemporary political thinking, especially in the development of the concept of political culture. The leading figure in the discussion of this concept, Gabriel Almond, is quite explicit about its classical roots and acknowledges that "something like a notion of political culture has been around as long as men have spoken and written about politics." (Almond, 1980:1) He traces its development from Plato through Machiavelli, Hobbes, Montesquieu, and de Tocqueville, and considers political education a part of political socialization, defined as the process by which the political culture (i.e., the values and beliefs of a society) are transmitted from one generation to the next. Since he stresses the transmission of such values *per se* rather than an understanding of the underlying philosophical viewpoints, it can be argued that his approach locates political education toward the indoctrination rather than the enlightenment end of the spectrum.

For a variety of reasons, the connections between political culture and education have been largely ignored by mainstream contemporary political science, particularly in Canada. These comments about Britain apply with equal force to Canada: "...Britain has never taken the matter of political education very seriously... Many other states have engaged in the process of political education in a far more explicit way than Britain. It is part of the 'melting pot' concept of the United States; part of the post-Nazi renaissance of German democracy; part of the whole Soviet way of life." (Heater,

1976:109) It has, however, been taken up with some enthusiasm by a small but growing number of writers, some of whose work has appeared in *International Journal of Political Education*, founded in 1977. In the initial editorial, Dutch political scientist Willem Langeveld observed that there had been a recent growth of interest in political education even in countries other than the United States and Germany which had recognized the need for it "for a long time." (Langeveld, 1977) The journal's overall focus, however, seems to be on political education in the high school, stressing the transmission rather than the analysis of political value systems.

It is interesting to compare the Canadian experience with that of the United States. A recent critical review of the political role of the American school laments the sorry state of political education in the United States. The author is dismayed that "political orientations promoted in public schools do not prepare students to be informed, active and responsible participants in the democratic political life of their society. (Wasburn, 1986:52) The major course of study has an indoctrination rather than an enlightenment orientation. Whereas Canadians might lament the school system's failure to inculcate a Canadian identity, some Americans are thus more apt to despair at the opposite situation: the oversocialization of school children to an uncritical fidelity to the U.S. political system. The preoccupation of American students of political socialization with the problem of learning about democracy parallels the singular focus on the problem of democracy in the pioneering work of Almond. (Almond and Verba, 1963) But in Canada our concern as political educators and as students of political education is not with democracy alone. Indeed, there is an entire agenda of other, more substantive issues that must be understood to render comprehensible the current configuration of Canadian political culture. Many of these issues are illustrated in the following incidents and anecdotes:

1. Last Winter, the Western press, reporting on the Gorbachev "revolution", noted that the movie Repentance, a harsh exposé of Stalinist repression, was approved for release. The man issuing the approval was Yegor Ligachev, a senior official in the Politburo whose title is *Chief Party Ideologist*.

2. At about the same time, Trent University political scientist Vaughan Lyon wrote a newspaper article critical of the decision in the mid-seventies to use public funds to support the three major political parties because it has had two unfortunate consequences for political education:

a) by guaranteeing financial support to the three major parties it has allowed them to ignore their responsibilities to *educate* the public;

b) it has frozen out the fringe parties from public financing rendering their voices mute on most political issues. "Current developments discourage the parties from playing an educational role and stimulating discussion of the wider issues facing the province and nation. To compensate for the neutering of the major parties, the smaller parties with something important to say – the Greens, the Libertarians, the feminists, if they organize as a party – should be encouraged . . . They should have access to the same funding as the main parties so that their messages can at least be heard on the hustings." (Lyon, 1987)

3. A nearly completed doctoral dissertation on the politics of the nuclear energy debate shows rather conclusively that the mass media's coverage of this issue has narrowed the terms of political discourse and debate to business liberalism perspectives as represented by industry, the government, and parliamentary opposition, ignoring almost completely the much more radical point of view of the anti-nuclear movement. To the extent that the general public get their information about most political issues from mass media, Canadians are woefully uninformed about this important topic. (Clow, in progress)

4. On Jan. 2, 1987, the *Globe and Mail* published an article by Oakland Ross on the persistence of the two "linguistic solitudes" in Montreal, describing the continued separate existence of Anglophones and Francophones with respect to newspapers, radio, t.v. and general cultural life. Notwithstanding the fact that relations between Anglophones and Francophones are much better now than in the past, and that "the borders between their respective domains have at least begun to blur," Ross points out that Anglophones and Francophones "read different books, magazines and newspapers; they tune in to different television channels; they live in different neighborhoods; they tipple at different bars; they get worked up about different issues; and they invariably go to different parties."

5. The *Toronto Star* of December 18, 1986 examined the actions of former citizenship judge Stephen Walter, who apparently took it upon himself to scrutinize the political views of immigrants seeking naturalized citizenship, and instruct them in his version

of political orthodoxy. He "told a landed immigrant from India that the Gandhis are 'a bunch of communist bastards,' and said the election of a Liberal government in Ottawa would lead Canada into communism and socialism." Judge Walter resigned the following day.

6. Canadian actor Michael J. Fox, the much acclaimed star of U.S. film and television, was asked recently if he would be moving to the United States permanently. He replied

> "no not me. I mean, I was really glad to get my green card, but I'm still a Canadian. You know, when you mention Russians to the Americans, all they think of is cold war and communism. When you mention Russians to Canadians, they just think hockey, and I'm proud of that." (radio interview, Saturday morning CBC, Feb. 7, 1987)

What do these incidents reveal about the nature of political education in Canada?

1. Unlike the Soviet Union, we do not have a single political party, nor do any of our parties employ a "chief party ideologist". That anyone with that title would exist, let alone decide on the suitability of films for public viewing, seems laughable. Film censorship does exist in Canada, but as far as forbidden content is concerned, the focus is almost exclusively on sex and violence, not political orthodoxy.

2. Our political parties not only eschew the bathwater of ideological self-purification, but they may have discarded the baby of political education as well. If so, there are more factors responsible than the public financing that Professor Lyon described. Increasingly, all three parties are moving towards brokerage politics and image manipulation and away from principled debate and discussion of the major issues. (Brodie, Chapter 14, this volume)

3. As mainstream political discourse becomes more homogenized, radical dissent is increasingly ignored by the media in favour of a narrowing spectrum of political values and opinion.

4. The cultural isolation between Anglophones and Francophones in Quebec, roughly a generation after the Quiet Revolution, the Bi-Bi Commission Report, the Official Languages Act, and the

October Crisis, is an example of a significant failure of political education in Canada.

5.,6. The public reaction to Judge Walter's extraordinary behaviour as well as and Michael J. Fox's casual reflections shed light on an aspect of Canadian political culture that sets it in contrast to that of the United States. Unlike them, we have never developed an ideological orthodoxy, or invented a Canadian way of life based on a uniform set of political values with the canonical properties of a civil religion. Our political education process does not teach Canadian youth that there exists a single self-evidently true set of political principles which are enshrined in our constitution and which imbue our political institutions. Canadian nationalism, in other words, is not ideologically based.

Understanding Political Education in Canada: A Hartzian Perspective

Much insight can be achieved by examining the above issues through the theoretical prism of Louis Hartz' fragment theory. According to this approach, societies founded by migration from Europe (Canada, the United States, Australia, Latin America) share in common certain patterns of cultural development. The ideology of the founding groups serves as a kind of cultural "genetic code" that profoundly influences later evolution. (Hartz, 1964) Canada, like South Africa, it is an example of a "two fragment" society, with two founding groups derived from different parent societies and manifesting different ideological orientations. In the case of English Canada, circumstances of history and geography (viz. the geographical isolation and historical pattern of settlement in the West) also generated the phenomenon of "subfragmentation", by which 20th century immigrants to the West were able to establish communities with political cultures markedly different from the rest of English Canada.

If we accept as a central objective of political socialization the transmission of the dominant political culture, several fascinating problems for Canadian political education emerge from the Hartzian perspective. First, the ideological content of political learning in French Canada can be expected to differ significantly from that of English Canada. Furthermore, regional differences within English Canada due to subfragmentation are exacerbated by the constitution, which awards jurisdiction over education to the provincial governments. It should be noted that this latter arrangement was originally designed to resolve the problem of cultural conflict between the two major founding fragments and not the subfragments of

English Canada. Its consequences for the nature of political education are monumental:

> It may very well be that education has to remain a provincial responsibility if Quebec is to stay in Confederation. Canada, therefore, has lacked the federal presence that might have given Canadians national goals and aspirations in education and that might have made it possible for Canadian schools to do more to develop a national identity. (Stamp, 1977:32)

According to Hartz, fragment societies devote considerable energy to the propagation of the fragment myth – the inculcation of the dominant values of the fragment society. They do so by first taking these values and enshrining them in the theology of nationalism:

> The Puritan must convert Puritanism itself, the one thing he has, into a new nationalism which denies the humiliation of the old. He must convert it into "Americanism," a new national spirit under the sun, grander than anything the world has ever seen. Or, if he happens to be a French-Canadian Catholic rather than a New England Puritan, he must subject that ethic to the same process. . . .If one becomes "Americanism," another becomes the spirit of the French-Canadian race. . . . (Hartz, 1964:11)

Moreover, the fragment theology must be inculcated in both the young (through the school system) and the newly arrived (by teaching the national catechism as part of citizenship training.) It is quite easy to see this process unfolding in the United States. It is equally clear that it must significantly affect the nature of political education.

When we turn to French Canada, the means of political education are different, but the goal is identical. The Church assumed the role of guardian of the fragment identity, and it appropriated the educational system to effect its mission. When the Quiet Revolution finally occurred in Quebec, it had at least one consequence Francophone nationalists found frightening. Removing control over education from the Church suddenly made the national culture vulnerable and fragile. This in turn necessitated a series of measures designed to preserve fragment identity, especially by protecting its most significant instrumentality, the French language. A series of measures were adopted, culminating in Bill 101. Furthermore, although the Québécois fragment had for nearly two centuries effectively avoided the problem of politically educating new

immigrants (because immigration was almost non-existent), it found itself squarely faced with this issue in the 1960s. It responded quickly, by attempting to force immigrants into the Québecois culture through compulsory French-language education.

The English Canadian fragment appears to differ from both the American and the French Canadian fragment. Given the ambivalent and almost anti-national quality of the original English Canadian fragment, born of the agonies of the Loyalist escape from the American Revolution, the essence of English Canadian national identity was problematic from the outset, and may perhaps be best characterized as a confused non-identity: *British* North Americans. The implications of this development for political education were fundamental:

> There was no similar feeling of national patriotism among educators in British North America during the crucial decades of the 1840's and 1850's when public control of education was advocated and achieved. This is clearly seen in the writings and policies of Egerton Ryerson, superintendent of education for Upper Canada from 1844 to 1876. While his American counterpart, Horace Mann, saw public schools as producing "good little Americans," Ryerson never saw the production of "good little Canadians" as a central reason for advocating publicly supported schools. Ryerson did see political value in free schooling; but it lay in inculcating loyalty to Britain and to British institutions in the face of persistent republican threats from the south. This meant the adoption of the Irish National textbooks, with their emphasis on selections from British literature, and where the interpretation in history and civics was oriented towards a reverence for the achievements of the mother country and her national heroes. (Stamp, 1977:31)

It is not difficult to trace the consequences of this peculiar orientation toward political education. Ambivalence toward the task of propagating the fragment culture in the guise of nationalism leads ultimately to the apotheosis of non-national celebration. The insistence that Canada does not have a national culture but instead affirms the multicultural heritage of Canadian society is surely a policy for the English Canadian *non*-nation. It is not expected to disturb the cultural uniqueness of the Québecois fragment recently reaffirmed in the Meech Lake agreement and enshrined in the recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society". The actual celebration of cultural diversity is, in fact, largely apolitical. Canadian children

learn about different customs and folklore, but are seldom taught about the political ideologies and values of the many social groups in the Canadian mosaic. English Canadians may learn much about the folk heroes or foods of their Francophone compatriots but not about different ideological and political traditions underlying the fabric of that society. The converse situation is also undoubtedly true, and the end point is the indefinite perpetuation of the two solitudes. If Canadian Anglophones and Francophones ever do become socialized to a common culture, it will likely be as a result of the increasing American influence, not through a genuinely Canadian effort at cross-cultural communications and understanding.

Political Education vs. Political Learning: How Political Culture Changes

Let us in closing revisit the central concepts underpinning our discussions. *Political Culture* must be understood as a macro level concept (the forest). The fragment theory (with appropriate modifications) helps to explain how Canada's political culture has developed from the rather complex mixture of culture genes implanted by our various founding groups; how it has grown and evolved, shaped and been shaped by our political institutions and by the historical experiences of the past two centuries. These experiences can be seen as having presented a series of challenges to the political system in the form of crisis or problems requiring extraordinary political response, usually accompanied by structural innovation and cultural mutation.

Political Education, in contrast to political culture, is a micro level concept (the trees). It can be defined as the process of both shaping the individual's values and attitudes (indoctrination) and transmitting to the individual relevant skills and knowledge (enlightenment).

Insofar as political culture changes, we can attribute this macro level change to a series of micro changes. But three caveats are needed. First, it is foolish to assume that all political learning results from conscious effort toward education. There is much more to the broad process of political socialization than that which is encompassed by conscious directed efforts at political education. Second, some cultural changes result from changes in technology, particularly in the technology of communication. Finally, some new learning occurs because informal agencies of political socialization generate new ideas and values, often in response to various challenges that force the political system to seek new ways of responding to social problems.

Canadian political culture is changing in a variety of important ways. We have present in our culture today a number of symbols,

slogans and values that were unknown or entirely marginalized 30 years ago. These include a widespread understanding of and commitment to a publicly supported system of health care to which we permit (indeed, insist upon) universal access; a system of regional assistance programs and institutions; an official policy of multiculturalism and a variety of attendant institutions and structures; an official policy of bilingualism and similarly a set of institutions and structures in support of it; a concern over the Americanization of our culture and some policies designed to counteract it; a concern to promote a Canadian identity and a variety of institutions and policies adopted or introduced consequent to this concern (including flag, anthem, constitution); an awareness of the rights and legitimate claims of aboriginal peoples; a (failed) policy on national economic/industrial development (FIRA) and energy policy (NEP); great concern for the protection of our environment and its attendant consequences; a Charter of Rights that has only begun to exert its influence on our political culture (Morton, 1987); an orientation toward the international environment that remains distinctive from (and in my view more attractive than) that of the United States. (Kirton, 1987). Political consciousness among women is now sufficiently well developed to sustain an event such as the Winter 1987 march – as much in celebration as in protest – of 15,000 Ottawa women in connection with International Women's Week, an event inconceivable 15 years ago. It speaks to the necessity of encouraging and promoting a feminist perspective on political education. It reminds us of the startling success of the feminist lobby in forcing into the Constitution Act amendments to recognize women's rights.

Some of this new political learning has occurred as a direct result of conscious effort to change political education. The efforts being made in the schools are reported in several subsequent chapters of this volume. The impact of the Symons Commission on pedagogy at the post secondary level is analysed by the commission chairman himself in Chapter 12. But political education is far too important to be left to the schools. It is a duty that must be shared by all of those groups and institutions capable of shaping the consciousness of the Canadian public. The conference which stimulated the production of this volume was important in raising the consciousness of participants from the media, education, politics and the bureaucracy. The Institute for Research on Public Policy has also an important future role to play in promoting effective political education in Canada.

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Chapter 2:

Political Education and Political Socialization

Ronald G. Landes

In the two decades since Expo 67, Canadian society has witnessed a needed emphasis on the preservation and promotion of its own culture. Several special study groups, such as the Commission on Canadian Studies chaired by Tom Symons (see Chapter 12) have grappled with the particularly difficult question of maintaining and enhancing the political and cultural identity of Canada. However, one formidable lacuna in this pattern of nationalistic concern has been a general lack of attention to the way in which values and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to the next. While nationalistic statements about the need to preserve and protect the Canadian culture make most of us feel good, research about the learning of political ideas would be of more value in the long run defence of the Canadian nation.

There is a pressing need to know more about the formation and development of political beliefs before we tackle the more difficult question of what values should be transferred to the next generation. Thus, our immediate focus should be on the political socialization process, with how political values are acquired. Our longer range perspective should be on the broader concept of political education, that is, with a focus on the content of what *should* be inculcated by political socialization. We must understand the mechanics of political learning before we adjust its content.

Political Socialization in Canada

The general lack of attention paid to the nature of the political socialization process in Canada is clearly revealed in a survey of articles published in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* between its inception in 1968 and the present. This, the only mainstream political science journal in the country, has published thirteen articles dealing with some aspect of the political socialization process. Two of these discuss theoretical dimensions of the subject, while six analyze political socialization in non-Canadian settings (France, Germany, England and the United States). The remaining five items, which focus on aspects of political socialization in Canada, are all "research notes" rather than full length articles. By 1987 it is still true to say that no full-length analysis of political learning in Canada has ever appeared in the preeminent journal of Canadian political scientists. Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that, of the five research notes which did appear, four were contributed by researchers at American universities.

Even with the paucity of research in the last decade, we still know some basic facts about the nature and operation of the political socialization process in Canada. The following summary is only intended as a brief introduction, rather than an exhaustive survey of the literature (for a more detailed account, see Landes, 1983, 1987).

Politics is not a particularly salient focus of concern for the average citizen, a conclusion which reveals much about the nature of the political socialization process. For most Canadian youth, the learning of political orientations is indirect and implicit, although the acquisition of some initial political beliefs begins early in life. Traditionally, politics has been avoided in the classroom, as well as around the family dinner table. While some changes have occurred in the past decade or two, most youth receive little if any education in the nature and operation of the Canadian parliamentary system.

The learning of political information centres initially on political leaders rather than on political institutions (Landes, 1977). While name recognition of political leaders, such as the Premier or Prime Minister, is widespread by the end of high school, understanding of the political roles of these same leaders is low (Pammett and Whittington, 1976). Even on simple content indicators, many researchers would not disagree with the conclusion that the average adolescent, as well as the typical voter, has a low level of political knowledge (Pammett, 1971). Basic political institutions and processes are incorrectly perceived and poorly understood. Comprehension of political issues, both domestic and international, typically ranks lower than the more straightforward items of political information.

Even though levels of political cognition are low, children and adolescents still develop an emotional tie to political leaders and the

political system. The typical pattern is for the child to personalize the political system (to perceive politics in terms of leaders) and to develop supportive attitudes and positive feelings toward the policy, although the level of political affect declines during the adolescent years. A particularly important affective tie is one to a specific political party, indicating the beginning of partisan identity. Canadian research, however, gives no clear picture of the extent to which party identification is transferred at young ages (Pammett, 1971; Pammett & Whittington, 1976; Landes, 1977).

Political socialization research has found that the major themes of Canada's political culture are reflected in the political learning process. For example, by the adolescent years strong patterns of regional loyalty are evident. Moreover, a number of studies have discovered that English-Canadian and French-Canadian youth are taught different political values (Zureik & Pike, 1975). Finally, the American impact on the learning of political values in Canada is quite evident. The American domination of the mass media has meant that many children have been socialized to American rather than Canadian political values. The impact of all three cultural themes (regionalism, dualism, continentalism) inhibits the development of a Canadian national identity.

Our discussion so far has centered on the content of the political learning process. However, we also need to consider the agents of socialization. The major "gatekeepers" in the acquisition of political values are the family, the school and the mass media. The family's impact is most apparent in providing the child with certain circumstances of birth (e.g., a social class position, a place of residence in a particular region of the country) which may seem non-political, but which have important consequences for what the child eventually is taught about his or her political environment. Schools are significant agents of socialization, given the number of hours students spend in them. However, schools are rarely used to teach explicit political values: what little political content is presented is done so in non-partisan terms. The mass media, especially television, have tremendous potential influence because of their ability to bypass intermediaries and provide information directly to children and adolescents.

The content of political learning is heavily influenced by the nature of these socializing agents. For example, the provincial jurisdiction over education has perpetuated (some would say promoted or even created) regional loyalties and French-English differences. Likewise, the creation of a common national identity has been hindered by the American dominance of our mass media. Thus, any reform of the current pattern of political socialization must

contemplate major changes in both the content and agents of political learning.

Political Education

While many people might not want to admit that they have a concern to manipulate the political learning process, that of course is exactly what most societies in fact do far more explicitly than our own. Above all else political education is a judgment call as to what is worth knowing and preserving in a nation's political culture. Failure to recognize such a fact simply relegates political education to the unconscious and unplanned terrain of cultural transmission. It indicates implicit satisfaction with the existing content of political socialization, which has just been outlined.

As a result of the failure to distinguish between political socialization and political education, or because of a confusion between the two, the growth of nationalist sentiment in the late 1960s and early 1970s stunted the investigation of the political learning process in Canada. I can well remember the explicitly hostile reception that political socialization research received, for example, at the annual meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association. A concern with the study of the political socialization process was seen as an unwarranted and unwanted intrusion of American political science methodology and values into the study of Canadian politics. Thus, rather paradoxically, the growth of Canadian nationalism retarded the study and understanding of the very process that is essential to preserving Canadian cultural identity. It has inhibited the creation of Canadian approaches to the study of political learning in this country.

A good example of our lack of attention to political education can be seen in my own experience of writing a college textbook on Canadian politics. The key federal granting agency did not see fit to support such a project, either through the research grant or leave fellowship programs. As a result, the text (Landes, 1983, 1987) was written while on my sabbatical leave, without a dime's worth of government support. At the time the project was undertaken, there was no similar comparative interpretation of Canadian politics currently available. Yet support of a needed textbook was rejected precisely because it was a textbook—with no recognition of its potential impact on Canadian political education. Instead, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council supports, through their Aid to Publication Program, specialized research publications of very limited public appeal and impact.

A somewhat similar misuse of resources is evident in federal government programs which bring "Canadianist" professors and

teachers from the United States to Canada in order to expand their knowledge of America's largest trading partner. As part of their itinerary, these "Canadianists" (from such places as Oklahoma, Colorado and Massachusetts) have visited me in Nova Scotia during the past several summers to discuss *The Canadian Polity*. It is a peculiar situation indeed when one arm of government gives travel grants to people to come to Canada to discuss basic Canadian materials which another arm of the government has deemed unworthy of support.

Conclusion

What can we say about the prospects for an improved pattern of Canadian political education in the future? First, we do not know enough to directly manipulate the political learning process with any assurance of success. We need major longitudinal studies of how students acquire political values in the Canadian context. We must also realize that the enhanced knowledge of the overall Canadian political culture and institutional structure will be difficult to transmit from one generation to the next. A multicultural society, strong regional political cultures, provincial control of the education process, and a limited level of Canadian nationalism will all mean that any attempt to define the content of political learning is guaranteed to be controversial and possibly unsuccessful. Still, anything is likely to be an improvement over the present system!

I would suggest that an immediate concern be with developing political literacy among our citizens. By this I mean an understanding of fundamental concepts and principles of government and politics, not the mere memorization of political trivia. Citizens need to know what cabinet government *means*, not to remember the list of current cabinet members. A politically literate citizen in Canada should know what key concepts, such as federalism and parliamentary sovereignty, refer to. A focus on political literacy by all the agents of socialization may be one way of getting around some of the previously-cited pitfalls of political education. Political literacy will stress the commonality of our political experiences, not our differences.

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Chapter 3

Political Knowledge in Canada

Michael Kirby and Ian McKinnon

Political education, and hence an informed electorate, should not be equated with highly factual knowledge of issue-based propositions. There is a plethora of data which points out the low levels of such concrete factual knowledge. People are not very knowledgeable about the details of issues. They also frequently cannot identify people who are important within government at an operational level, such as Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament.

This lack of detailed knowledge does not mean that Canadians do not understand major issues. Indeed, Canadians do understand major issues in general terms, though often not the detailed nuances of policy positions. In these terms Canadians understand domestic public policy issues reasonably well. Interest in, and understanding of, international issues is relatively low in Canada compared, for example, with the United States. On issues such as war in the Middle East, arms negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and apartheid in South Africa, Canadians are much less knowledgeable and interested than they are in issues which affect them directly. Since relations between Canada and the United States frequently have direct, substantial domestic economic impact, Canadians don't think of Canada-U.S. issues as international issues, but rather in a domestic context.

In Canadian politics, single issues (and single issue special interest groups) are much less important than they are in the United States. Polling shows that Canadians frequently vote for a party even

when they dislike some of the specific policies of that party. Canadians develop an intuitive feeling about a party, its leader, and its overall program and vote on the basis of that package, rather than voting for or against a party or a local candidate purely on the basis of a single issue.

What does count with voters when they are making up their minds are the values of a party and its leader, and the priorities of that person and that party. Whose interests do they represent? What are they interested in? What are their capabilities? On these criteria people can be extraordinarily acute.

Once the leader of a major party has been in office for even a relatively few years, Canadians are able to paint a surprisingly accurate picture of that leader's strengths, weaknesses and values. As an illustration, when the average Canadian is asked to rate a political leader according to a set of personal characteristics such as his intelligence, ability to understand issues, decisiveness, integrity, etc., and the average rating on each characteristic is compared with the rating of the same leader given by a dozen or so people who know that leader well, the two ratings of the leader are remarkably consistent.

Repeated exposure, particularly on television with its strong visual images, enables Canadians to understand the character, and the strengths and weaknesses, of a political leader as well as they would if they met that leader personally and got to know him well. Television is very much a transparent medium. The whole notion that through television one can create an artificial image is hogwash. Attempts to transform politicians by altering the values to be associated with them are almost immediately detected by the population as artifice.

In addition to television, the print media give an enormous amount of space to political stories. We know from many market research studies we have done for newspapers that political news, particularly local political news, is one of their most popular features. But the public's interest is in real news, not commentary. Non-news page political coverage is read by only half the people who read political stories on news pages, particularly the front page. Interest in political commentary by columnists ranks well behind newspaper readership interest in grocery ads, classified ads and the comics.

Another illustration of Canadians' interest in politics is the size of the listening audience which electronic news and public affairs programs attract. Consider, for example, the number of viewers of *The National* or the CTV evening newscast. If Canadians were not interested in politics, these shows would not get a fraction of the audience rating that they do. Furthermore, this interest in broadcast news has enjoyed a dramatic increase in the last 20 years. Immediately after the Second World War, news was thought of as a

relatively insignificant element of programming. Many of the individuals in firms who applied for radio and television licenses in the 1950s and early 1960s included in their program proposals an element of news because they thought it would help win CRTC approval of their license application, not because they thought it would be a major source of revenue. But in the last 20 years public interest in news has grown enormously, to the point where we now have a national, all-news radio network.

People are able to clearly distinguish between parties on the question of which one best understands the concerns of various parts of the population. People understand which cabinets are united in their goals and which are not so united; they are very capable, not only of determining who has vision, but what a leader's priorities are. And Canadians are realistic – after recent federal and provincial elections, nearly 80 per cent of respondents said they did not expect the winning party to carry out most of its campaign promises. Canadians are cynical about campaign promises, particularly when they involve large expenditures of money.

What the average Canadian does in assessing how he or she will vote in an election is to ask, subconsciously, the following question: Which leader will make the decisions I would want him to make when major problems arise during his mandate? People are smart enough to realize that many of the major issues which will confront a government during its period in office are unknown before the term in office actually begins. Consequently, they try to choose as leader of the government the individual most capable of dealing with new issues as they arise in the way in which that voter would like them to be dealt with.

Therefore Canadians vote for the leader and party who they think will take appropriate decisions on major issues – issues which are unknown at election time, but which will arise later. They base this judgement on three things: first, their assessment of the personal characteristics of the leader (which we have already argued is a reasonably accurate one); second, on the quality of the people around the leader – the competence of the team; and third, on the general policy orientation of the party, its set of values and priorities. This selection process is not based, and quite rationally not based, on the details of specific policy issues people profess little knowledge of. In short, it is a judgement on what leader and party are right for the times.

When voters do consider issues, a common action is to turn to a proxy. Free trade provides a classic current example. People's responses to the debate on free trade frequently recall John Kennedy's request for a one-handed economist. People see a whole set of arguments that they themselves realize they cannot differentiate and

judge rationally. In the absence of understanding they look to surrogates who represent their interests, and frequently adopt that person's or that group's stance.

Given that the fundamental involvement of all but a small group of political "gladiators" consists of a vote once every four years, people have chosen the appropriate criteria for such decisions. Unless the goal of political education is to expand the number of people who become actively involved in the ambit of decision-making, the state of this education is quite adequate at the moment. Canadians have, through their attention and interest, been successful at creating what is for them a rational decision process in their voting and their observation of politics.

Chapitre 4

L'éducation politique des masses et des élites

Maurice Pinard et
Patricia Fitzsimmons-LeCavalier

Le but de ce court texte est de présenter quelques observations générales sur l'état de l'information et de l'opinion politiques des citoyens et des élites à partir de leurs manifestations au Québec à travers divers sondages d'opinion réalisés au cours des vingt-cinq dernières années. Notre propos tient à deux points essentiels: d'une part, les citoyens sont très souvent beaucoup moins informés qu'on ne l'assume, et d'autre part, les élites se trompent souvent sur les mandats que les citoyens veulent bien leur donner.

Commençons pas le premier point, qui peut s'énoncer sous forme de la proposition générale suivante. Il existe souvent, à notre avis, un fossé énorme entre le degré d'information politique que possèdent les citoyens ordinaires, d'une part, et les experts et membres des élites, politiques ou autres, d'autre part. Trop souvent les seconds ont tendance à assumer, implicitement du moins, que le public est bien informé au sujet de telle ou telle question, et qu'il s'y intéresse beaucoup. Face à des remises en cause de tels postulats, on veut bien admettre qu'il existe des limites dans l'information et l'intérêt de la plupart des citoyens, mais même alors on demeure bien en deça de la réalité.

Il semble qu'il faille avoir été fréquemment exposé aux dures révélations des sondages pour toucher du doigt, pour ainsi dire, l'ampleur de l'ignorance des électeurs, même sur des questions majeures qui pourtant soulèvent fortement leur intérêt. Que dire alors des questions secondaires qui ne les intéressent que peu. . .

Pour se rendre compte de l'ampleur du problème, considérons par exemple les cas suivants, tirés du récent débat sur l'avenir du Québec au sein du Canada, en particulier lors du référendum de mai 1980. Personne sans doute ne contestera qu'il s'agissait là d'un débat dont les enjeux étaient extrêmement importants, que ce fut sans doute l'un des débats majeurs de la politique canadienne au cours de ce siècle, sinon depuis plus longtemps.

Et de fait, à la veille de cette consultation, – plus exactement en décembre 1979, – un sondage DECIMA-SORECOM fait au Québec révélait un niveau très élevé d'intérêt pour le référendum qui s'en venait. Pas moins de 43% se disaient y être "très intéressés", et au total 72% se disaient "très" ou "modérément intéressés". Seuls 28% se disaient n'être "pas" ou "pas très intéressés". Par contraste, lors du sondage Hamilton-Pinard de mai 1980, seulement 25% déclaraient que "la politique (les) intéressait beaucoup". De même, dans les divers sondages de Radio-Canada, plus de 80% en moyenne, affirmaient considérer le référendum comme un événement "très important" ou "assez important".

Et pourtant, malgré l'importance reconnue de l'événement et l'intérêt marqué qu'on y portait, le degré d'information des électeurs demeurait incroyablement bas. Considérons par exemple la question suivante soumise lors du sondage Hamilton-Pinard: "Si la souveraineté-association se réalisait, est-ce que selon vous le Québec demeurerait une province du Canada?" Les résultats que nous avons obtenus révèlent que même pas la moitié des personnes interrogées, soit seulement 46% (44% chez les francophones), savaient que sous ce régime le Québec ne serait plus une province du Canada. Pas moins de 38% croyaient encore, quelque dix jours avant le référendum, que sous ce régime le Québec serait encore une province canadienne, et 15% disaient n'en rien savoir. En somme, seulement une minorité savait que le régime de souveraineté-association impliquait un Etat distinct et non pas quelque autre arrangement fédératif. On peut assumer par ailleurs qu'au sein des élites et des experts, à peu près tous connaissaient la réponse appropriée à cette question. (Pour plus de détails sur ce point comme sur plusieurs autres qui suivent, voir Pinard et Hamilton, 1984.)

Voyons un autre exemple. En avril 1980, SORECOM demandait à un échantillon de Québécois si la "souveraineté politique" et "l'indépendance politique" signifiaient "essentiellement la même chose", ou "des choses passablement différentes". Alors que ces notions sont fondamentalement identiques, près de la moitié des répondants (48%) croyaient qu'elles étaient passablement différentes; seuls 45% y voyaient la même chose, alors que 6% n'en savaient rien.

Un dernier exemple. Le sondage Cloutier-CROP de juin 1979 soumettait aux répondants l'énoncé suivant avec lequel ces derniers

devaient se dire en accord ou en désaccord: "Dans le fond, il n'y a pas de différence réelle entre le fédéralisme renouvelé et la souveraineté-association". Alors qu'il s'agissait des options opposées, respectivement, des camps du NON et du OUI, et que les élites ne s'y trompaient pas, à peine plus de la moitié (56%) des électeurs savaient que ces deux options n'étaient pas identiques. Les autres n'y voyaient pas de différence réelle (21%) ou ignoraient si elles étaient identiques ou différentes (23%).

Dans des entrevues en profondeur, non structurées, faites à l'époque, il y eut des répondants, à qui on demandait ce que pour eux la souveraineté signifiait, qui nous déclarèrent que cela avait peut-être quelque chose à faire avec la reine... Ce degré extrême de confusion correspondait sans doute au type de l'électeur "barbare", pour emprunter à la typologie de Laponce (1967), mais il faut ajouter qu'il ne s'agissait pas de cas isolés ou uniques. Lors des ces entrevues, très souvent, les répondants nous disaient n'y rien comprendre, ajoutant quelque fois, de façon désespérée, et cela tant au sujet de la souveraineté-association que du fédéralisme renouvelé: "Si seulement ou nous disait ce que cela veut dire."

Évidemment, le manque étonnant d'information sur les questions que nous venons de mentionner variait selon, entre autres, le degré de scolarité des répondants. Ainsi, sur la question de savoir si le Québec demeurerait une province du Canada en régime de souveraineté-association, 71% des francophones du Québec n'ayant qu'une scolarité de niveau primaire ne pouvaient donner une réponse exacte. Mais même chez les plus scolarisés (seize années ou plus de scolarité), la proportion des francophones sans réponse exacte, à 32%, demeurait quand même étonnamment élevé.

À partir de ces résultats, il nous faut conclure que chaque fois que les problèmes débattus sont quelque peu complexes, le manque d'information des électeurs ne porte pas seulement sur des questions mineures ou sur des questions de détails, mais sur des points fondamentaux, reliés à des enjeux majeurs. Dans de tels cas, les électeurs ne sont pas bien renseignés même sur des aspects très généraux des questions soulevées.

Nous souscrivons donc entièrement aux propos de Converse (1964: 212-21; notre traduction) qui écrit:

> Il est bien établi que les différences dans le degré d'information au sein d'un groupe représentatif de la population sont simplement renversantes, passant de trésors d'information bien structurés, parmi les membres des élites s'intéressant à un sujet donné, à quelques fragments qu'on pourrait pratiquement mesurer en termes de "bits" au sens technique du terme. . . Très peu

> d'information descend très loin dans la population... (Ceci) est largement dû à des différences de scolarité, mais est également fortement modifié par la diversité des intérêts et des goûts des individus...

Plus loin, Converse ajoutait que les analystes sophistiqués se trompent systématiquement à cet égard, à cause des "illusions d'optique" dont ils sont victimes, et qui résultent de leur participation sociale dans des groupes très restreints.

Si le public était mal informé au moment du référendum, il faut ajouter que les hommes politiques et les média d'information n'ont pas fait l'essentiel pour remédier à cette situation. Dans le camp du OUI, on n'avait évidemment pas intérêt à lever les ambiguïtés; on les a même entretenues en ne parlant, par exemple, que d'une "nouvelle entente" avec le reste du Canada. Dans le camp du NON, on n'a pas été, il semble, suffisamment conscient du problème et de l'intérêt qu'on aurait eu à dissiper les informations erronées.

Évidemment notre propos ne vise pas à établir que sur toutes les questions d'intérêt public l'état des connaissances des citoyens en est à un niveau si incroyablement limité. Lorsqu'il s'agit de questions vraiment plus simples et surtout qui touchent leurs valeurs ou leurs intérêts, les citoyens peuvent saisir assez bien les enjeux en cause. Ainsi, les citoyens appréhendent assez facilement – et nous dirions, assez justement, de façon générale, – les comportements des hommes politiques soulevant des questions de moralité publique, mettant leur honnêteté en cause. Et de fait, on observe facilement, grâce aux sondages, l'impact négatif de telles situations sur le sort des partis au pouvoir.

Les électeurs appréhendent aussi assez facilement, et assez justement, le climat économique général – qu'il s'agisse de *good times* ou de *bad times*, comme disent les anglophones. Et ils ajustent vite leur comportement politique en conséquence. Finalement, les électeurs jaugent assez rapidement les personnalités des hommes politiques et surtout des leaders qui leur offrent leurs services. Mais ce qu'on évalue facilement, ce ne sont pas leurs positions sur des questions précises, mais leur personnalité même: s'agit-il, par exemple, d'un chef fort, d'un homme de conviction, au sens décisionnel, qui sait – et sait communiquer – où il s'en va, ou au contraire d'un personnage politique dont la personnalité est faible à ces égards? Encore là, beaucoup de choix politiques se font sur cette simple base, et constituent de fait des mandats en blanc à des hommes ou à des femmes en qui on a décidé de faire confiance.

Ce qui nous mène à notre deuxième proposition générale, qui prend la forme suivante: les citoyens ordinaires ont fréquemment des valeurs et des intérêts distincts de ceux des élites, ce qui conduit ces

dernières à mal interpréter le comportement des électeurs et les mandats qu'ils leur confèrent. Dans ce cas-ci, ce sont les élites qui sont mal informées, qui se prêtent à de fausses analyses, en partie parce que les masses refusent de jouer les jeux politiques que les élites leur organisent. C'est l'éducation politique de l'intelligentsia (politiciens, journalistes, commentateurs, etc.) qui est ici en cause. Ceci peut servir les intérêts des élites dans certains cas, mais dans d'autres cas, cela peut très bien les desservir.

Pour illustrer cette proposition, nous remonterons dans le temps, au moment de l'élection provinciale de 1962 au Québec. Deux ans après leur retour au pouvoir en 1962, au début de la révolution tranquille, les Libéraux décidèrent de rechercher un renouvellement de mandat et une majorité plus substantielle. Sous les pressions de René Lévesque, alors ministre libéral, la campagne électorale fut menée sur le thème de la nationalisation des compagnies d'électricité, avec un slogan nationaliste emprunté à Lionel Groulx, "Maîtres chez nous". Au terme de la campagne, les Libéraux remportèrent une victoire décisive, passant de 51.6% des voix en 1960 à 56.5%, et remportant 63 des 94 sièges, comparativement à 51 en 1960.

L'analyse quasi-unanime qui a été faite de cette élection fut que les électeurs avaient donné un mandat clair, un appui positif au nouveau "nationalisme" du parti Libéral du Québec. Notre propre analyse, à partir d'une étude par sondage faite à l'époque, devait jeter de sérieux doutes sur cette interprétation. Il semble bien que la nationalisation de l'électricité n'ait eu à peu près rien à faire avec la réélection des Libéraux.

D'abord les électeurs ne semblaient pas beaucoup s'intéresser à cette question, sans doute parce que l'enjeu ne semblait pas devoir affecter sensiblement leurs intérêts matériels. De fait, seulement une minorité (45%) semblaient être en faveur de la nationalisation, alors qu'un quart des électeurs (26%) n'y étaient pas favorables et qu'un électeur sur trois (29%) n'avait pas d'opinion. L'électorat était donc relativement indécis ou indifférent sur le problème central de la campagne libérale.

De plus les changements d'allégeance politique qui se produisirent entre 1960 et 1962 ont eu peu à faire avec cet enjeu de la campagne. Au total, seulement 12% des électeurs révélèrent avoir changé de parti. De ce nombre, pas moins de 7% le firent tout en étant indifférents à la nationalisation, ou en étant inconsistant soit que, étant favorables à la nationalisation, ils passaient à l'Union Nationale, ou que, étant défavorables, ils passaient aux Libéraux). Seulement 5% le firent de façon consistante. Bien plus, notre analyse révéla qu'en tenant constante la satisfaction envers les Libéraux, la nationalisation n'avait pas eu d'effet sur le vote.

De fait, c'était cette satisfaction générale envers les Libéraux qui s'avéra le déterminant majeur de leurs succès – et, en particulier, la satisfaction des électeurs concernant la réforme de l'éducation entreprise par les Libéraux et leur instauration d'un plan d'assurance-hospitalisation.

En somme, l'erreur d'interprétation vint du fait que l'intelligentsia prêtait aux masses des motivations analogues aux siennes. Si le nationalisme articulé des élites peut facilement organiser leur pensée et leur action politique, comme lors de cette campagne électorale, il n'en va pas de même dans l'ensemble de la population. En particulier, ce n'est souvent que lorsqu'ils se sentent menacés dans leurs intérêts ethniques, ou lorsqu'ils perçoivent des liens évidents entre une mesure politique et ces intérêts, que les masses agissent en conséquence, ce qui ne fut pas du tout le cas en 1962. Les intérêts des masses et ceux des élites étaient bien divergents lors de cette campagne, et ce fut un mandat pour continuer dans la même veine, plutôt que pour nationaliser le réseau hydro-électrique, que l'électorat donna alors aux Libéraux. (Pour plus de détails, voir Pinard, 1969.)

Pour conclure, qu'il nous soit permis d'insister que notre intention n'est pas de souscrire à un modèle du comportement politique dans lequel l'électeur est perçu à la fois comme acteur mal informé et facilement influencé pas la propagande politique ou sa propre partisanerie, et comme acteur irrationnel. Bien que souvent mal informés, les électeurs savent faire quand même des choix rationnels et évalués, à court et à long terme, les conséquences de leurs choix politiques et les coûts et bénéfices de leurs options. S'ils demeurent mal informés, c'est que les coûts sélectifs à encourir pour obtenir une meilleure information souvent dépassent de beaucoup les gains sélectifs qu'on en obtiendrait. Il est alors rationnel de prendre des raccourcis, par exemple en s'en remettant à la partisanerie ou à des groupes de référence, en autant que ceux-ci se sont avérés servir leurs intérêts dans le passé. En d'autres mots, les électeurs, bien que souvent limités dans leur niveau d'information, savent quand même déceler leurs intérêts et les poursuivre rationnellement (voir LeCavalier et Pinard, 1987). En fait, c'est ce qui leur fait suivre à l'occasion des trajets politiques si divergents de ceux que les élites leur proposent.

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Chapitre 5

L'éducation politique et l'engagement international

Pierre S. Pettigrew

Les enjeux d'aujourd'hui sont globaux et aucun pays ne peut régler seul ses problèmes. A mon avis, le Canada a besoin d'un engagement international plus vigoureux et la formation politique des Canadiens doit développer une conscience plus articulée de cet engagement et l'intégrer à notre culture politique.

L'information accorde plus d'importance aujourd'hui qu'autrefois aux nouvelles internationales. La nature de cette information demeure ou de l'ordre du spectacle, avec des images-chocs de Beyrouth ou d'Éthiopie, ou comme on a pu le voir lors de la visite du Premier ministre Mulroney en Afrique australe, elle s'attarde davantage à souligner l'effet positif sur l'image d'un gouvernement en difficulté qu'à analyser notre politique étrangère dans cette partie du monde.

L'intérêt n'est pas suffisamment centré, me semble-t-il, sur les éléments qui pourraient assister les Canadiens à prendre des décisions judicieuses pour l'avenir du pays, leur permettre de faire éventuellement une meilleure contribution aux relations internationales.

Les grandes questions de guerre et de paix déterminent notre avenir collectif. Il en est de même au plan économique car les activités économiques internationales influent considérablement sur les choix politiques. Même aux États-Unis, un pays dont on disait jadis qu'il avait l'économie la plus autarcique du monde, la situation économique extérieure est devenue déterminante malgré la solidité de la base industrielle, l'abondance des ressources naturelles et énergétiques, la

qualité de la main-d'oeuvre et l'importance du marché intérieur qui caractérisent ce pays. L'internationalisation des économies explique largement cette situation. Au lendemain du dernier conflit mondial, les dirigeants ont fait le pari de l'internationalisation. Il s'est opéré un changement de pouvoir dans le monde. De nouvelles institutions ont reflété ce changement.

La Conférence de Bretton Woods, en 1944, par exemple, a donné naissance à plusieurs organisations internationales dont le Fonds monétaire international et la Banque mondiale. L'accord général sur les tarifs douaniers et le commerce, le GATT, établi en 1947, a permis de réduire le tarif douanier moyen à travers le monde de 40% à 4%. Le montant du commerce mondial est passé de 250 milliards de dollars à 2 000 milliards annuellement, d'où une interdépendance beaucoup plus grande des économies nationales. On espérait ainsi qu'une meilleure coopération monétaire et commerciale internationale permettrait au monde d'éviter l'effondrement financier et les reculs du commerce mondial auxquels plusieurs historiens attribuent l'éclatement de la guerre de 1939.

L'internationalisation des économies s'est réalisée par l'augmentation considérable des échanges de biens et de services, par le flux plus élevé des capitaux et par la diversité des opérations effectuées. Le processus manufacturier s'est beaucoup transformé, chaque étape de la production étant effectuée là où il est plus rentable de la faire, d'où l'augmentation des exportations de pièces, par exemple. Les progrès des télécommunications ont entraîné la transmission rapide de données sur de longues distances, permettant aux industries de services de fonctionner sur une échelle internationale. Les licences que les Américains abhorraient vendre il y a seulement dix ans, sont maintenant disponibles sur le marché. Quand ils n'arrivent pas à vendre leurs biens, les Américains, comme les autres, doivent vendre leur technologie.

Les "sociétés en participation" sont devenues monnaie courante. Dans l'automobile, AMC-Renault et Chrysler-Mitsubishi sont apparus. Ce type d'organisme a eu beaucoup d'impact sur la montée de certaines importations. Ainsi, pour rester dans le secteur automobile, les importations de voitures japonaises en Amérique du nord font plus de tort aux travailleurs locaux qu'aux corporations qui ont acquis des intérêts dans chacun des pays en cause.

L'importance de ces phénomènes a sans doute atteint la conscience des Canadiens, mais leurs conséquences et ramifications ne pèsent pas encore suffisamment dans le processus de décision chez nous. Pourtant, le Canada est l'un des pays les plus commerçants du monde. Nous exportons 30% de notre produit intérieur brut, alors que les États-Unis en exportent 10%, et le Japon 15%. La part des produits finis dans nos exportations s'améliore d'année en année,

surtout dans notre commerce avec les États-Unis, ce qui signifie qu'un plus grand nombre d'emplois en dépend.

De plus, notre déficit du commerce des services est le plus élevé de tous les pays industrialisés. Ce déficit représente une importante détérioration de notre équilibre commercial car le secteur des services est en pleine croissance et constitue aujourd'hui la principale source de création d'emplois. Aux États-Unis, les services non gouvernementaux ont contribué 70% des 20 millions d'emplois créés dans les années 70 pendant que le secteur manufacturier n'en a créé qu'un seul million. Le commerce mondial des services augmente de 20% par année alors que celui des biens stagne. Les investissements étrangers dans notre économie représentent une part plus grande que chez n'importe quel autre pays industrialisé.

Certains groupes de pression ont beaucoup contributé à l'éducation du public en ce qui a trait à leur secteur d'activité: que l'on pense au développement, au désarmement international, à l'apartheid. Il n'en est pas de même pour les questions économiques. Ce sont surtout les fonctionnaires et les entrepreneurs privés qui suivent ces questions. Or, ils ne sont pas naturellement orientés vers l'éducation populaire. Pour leur part, les journalistes économiques ne sont pas très spécialisés et leur sujet ne se prête pas autant à la dramatisation lorsqu'on dépasse les images-chocs de Beyrouth et d'Éthiopie.

Pourtant puisque des choix politiques s'imposent, la connaissance du contexte économique international par la population, de ses limites et de ses possibilités, est essentielle.

Prenons par exemple l'option américaine privilégiée par le gouvernement actuel dans sa négociation de libre-échange. Il est frappant de constater combien les analyses qu'on présente qu public se limitent toujours à considérer la question essentiellement en termes bilatéraux et non dans une perspective économique mondiale.

Pourtant, les États-Unis ont perdu leur supériorité économique sur la scène internationale. Ils sont passés, de 1981 à 1986, du plus grand créditeur de la planète au plus grand débiteur. Leur déficit commercial dépassait les 170 milliards de dollars l'an dernier. Alors que les États-Unis étaient responsables de 50% du PNB mondial, il y a trente ans, ils en représentent maintenant 25%. Notre balance commerciale des biens y est favorable (nous y vendons 78% de nos exportations mais n'y achetons que 50% de nos importations). Par ailleurs, notre balance commerciale avec l'Europe et l'Asie est largement déficitaire.

Les médias nous rappellent chaque jour que la valeur du dollar canadien monte par rapport au dollar américain. Mais ils oublient de dire que le dollar canadien a perdu 40% de sa valeur par rapport aux devises européennes et japonaises. Ainsi, en janvier dernier, l'intérêt

porté par les Japonais aux obligations du Canada a permis au dollar canadien de mieux réagir sur les marchés que le dollar américain. Le marché japonais, premier exportateur mondial de capitaux, est très prometteur à la fois pour ses capacités de financement, mais également pour l'ouverture de son marché qui suivra le moment où ses crédits arriveront à maturité. À l'heure de l'étrange négociation du libre-échange, il est important de surveiller nos capacités d'exporter ailleurs qui augmentent avec la baisse du dollar.

Il me semble qu'au moment où nous sommes sur le point de faire des choix cruciaux pour notre avenir, ces faits devraient être davantage mis en lumière, pesés, analysés. Ce qui manque, présentement à notre éducation politique, même en haut lieu, c'est la précision, l'articulation de ces éléments les uns par rapport aux autres, c'est le *portrait global* dans lequel tout cela s'insère.

En terminant, j'aimerais vous faire part de deux autres constatations au sujet de l'engagement international du Canada:

Premièrement, après avoir considéré les changements des marchés des capitaux, des biens et des services, il faut constater que sur le marché des valeurs cérébrales, sur le marché des idées, le Canada connaît une balance commerciale déficitaire. En effet, nos décideurs politiques sont facilement à la solde des modes américaines. Ainsi la déréglementation dans le transport peut être positive pour les États-Unis sans être souhaitable pour un pays de dimension géographique supérieure mais avec une population dix fois plus petite. Il est intéressant d'ailleurs de noter que les deux pays qui ont le mieux réagi aux nouvelles conditions économiques internationales, le Japon et l'Allemagne fédérale, ont développé une relation entre l'État et leur secteur privé particulièrement originale, bien différente du modèle américain.

Deuxièmement, la coordination semble faible au Canada entre nos politiques intérieures et extérieures. Ainsi, nos gouvernements négocient une libéralisation commerciale internationale invitant à une compétitivité accrue sans préparer l'économie à y faire face par un effort de rationalisation industrielle et d'élimination de barrières au commerce à l'intérieur même du pays.

Dans l'ensemble, nous avons de bons spécialistes, de bons techniciens, mais il nous manque la perspective globale, la capacité de faire la synthèse et la coordination de toutes les données. Il faut donc, par example, travailler à élargir l'expérience internationale de nos jeunes. Leur orientation actuelle est canalisée vers des organisations volontaires internationales qui ont été et continuent d'être très utiles, mais dont l'idéal humanitaire maintient une conception de la scène internationale où les blancs riches vont aider les noirs pauvres à s'en sortir. Ceci contribue à véhiculer une conception dépassée du monde.

Il serait très utile que des entreprises et des corporations établissent des programmes d'échanges de stagiaires et de cadres avec l'étranger, et pas seulement pour ceux qui se destinent aux fonctions d'exportation. Ils en rapporteraient une meilleure connaissance et une meilleure compréhension du monde extérieur. Toute formation politique sans perspective internationale globale est inadéquate car les choix politiques et économiques dépendent largement aujourd'hui des conditions mondiales.

Commentary:

Political Education and Social Policy

Richard J. Van Loon

In commenting on the state of political education from a social policy perspective we must begin by establishing the nature of the problem. On the face of it we might conclude that it is a problem with the political knowledge level of the general public. Only a minority of Canadians, for example, know that the federal government provides any money for post-secondary education, or is involved in health service delivery. We also know from public opinion surveys that no one can tell you what "net tax transfer incidence" is or can relate it to their lives. Perhaps the marginal cost of learning about tax transfer incidence is lower than the marginal value of determining its impact; nonetheless, the fact remains that very few Canadians know about its impact on their lives. So, the general state of public knowledge about social programs and policies, as with economic and foreign policies, could be defined as lamentable.

However, the link between public policy and public opinion and knowledge is at best relatively indirect, and may even be intentionally negative at times. If Canadians *did* have good knowledge about what "tax transfer incidence" meant, they almost certainly would not support income redistribution programs. So, the desireability of a link is perhaps questionable. In addition, in the making of public policy, governments everywhere tend to follow international trends. Hence in the social policy world at the moment there is a general tightening up, a general lowering of interest in

income redistribution. That is an international trend, not a particularly Canadian one.

Rather than the state of public knowledge in general, the subject of most concern to me relates to elites. After all, elites make policy and it is their knowledge and proposals that count most. However, tests of elite knowledge of social policy are very imperfect, because we lack elite surveys on policy subjects, and have to rely on relatively weak anecdotal evidence. A potential problem does exist in that the number of forums for elite discussion and debate of social policy issues are quite limited in Canada.

The group basis for elite input is relatively weak. Only the Canadian Council on Social Development really qualifies as a national social policy interest group. Several other interest groups, like the Canadian Tax Foundation or the Business Council on National Issues, occasionally comment on social issues, but are not centrally concerned with this field. Other special interest groups that concentrate on social policy, such as the Canadian Hospital Association or the Canadian Medical Association, are relatively weak at the national level. So there is a lack of ability in Canada for the interest group system to integrate or articulate national social policy concerns.

There is as well no centre of excellence in Canada for social policy research or instruction. We have some reasonably good social work schools, but they essentially concentrate on turning out case workers. Such schools have an interest in social policy, but this interest is secondary to their professional interest in other subjects. Neither are there national journals in Canada that concentrate exclusively on social policy, nor is there substantial press interest in the subject.

The picture is not all bleak, however. Within government I think our social policy is really quite good, and in several areas like income transfers, tax transfer integration, and many aspects of health policy, Canada really is a world leader in policy development. Unfortunately, a lot of the information produced by that expertise is internal to government, and not easily transmissible to the public. In addition, some latent interest groups – the "grey panthers" come to mind – are in Canada very mobilizeable, so that when there is a social policy issue that does affect somebody's concentrated interests, the interest get expressed fairly readily. That is a reflection, I think, of the generally high level of education, and quite high level of political efficacy, within Canada, but it nonetheless makes the situation somewhat better.

I think we need an intellectual centre, a centre of excellence, that deals with social policy issues. The United States has many of them; the Universities of Minnesota and Wisconsin both have institutes for

research on policy, and Harvard-MIT has a centre for urban studies. We have no such centre in Canada and it would be a very worthwhile endeavour from the perspective of communicating social policy information to the public to have one established. It would also be beneficial to have a Canadian journal which specializes in social policy.

Finally, I think we need to keep our eyes open more often for opportunities to "piggyback" social policy education onto vehicles established for other purposes. A good recent example was with the Macdonald Commission. That commission started out without any concern for social policy, but rather with a mandate to examine the economic prospects for Canada. As they went across the country, they discovered that Canadians did not think of government primarily as an economic development mechanism. Rather, Canadians think of their government first and foremost in terms of social policy: police, health, Indians, income transfer programs, etc. The commissioners recognized this, and decided they needed some consideration of social policy in their report. This provided an opportunity to reopen dormant debates on some social policy issues like income redistribution and guaranteed annual income. So, we have to be opportunistic, and perhaps not too proud sometimes about what opportunities we take, when it comes to political education in the social policy area.

II
Agents of Political Education

Chapter 6:

Political Education in the Schools: A View from Atlantic Canada

Marshall W. Conley

From its very beginning public education has had a political purpose. It has been intended to train the young to take their place within a particular society, to give them whatever skills, knowledge and values were thought necessary for the continuation of their society. Durkheim was only stating a fact when he described education as

> The influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are required of him both by the political society as a whole and by the special milieu for which he is specifically destined. (Lukes, 1972:132)

This kind of formulation, of course, ignores the divisions within society by speaking of it "as a whole," and thus ignores the role of education in enabling one group within a society to control or manipulate others. As Susan Houston has observed, "A common school system was an institution established and supported by one group of people not for their own children, but for the children of others." (Houston, 1972:256) Nonetheless, it makes its point: public education is and has been inevitably political. Its mandate is to train citizens, in the widest sense of the term.

Despite this long tradition, however, the recent interest in political education represents something new. If nothing else, it is giving new emphasis and directing renewed attention to the citizenship role of education. It is trying to define – or redefine – more precisely the nature of that citizenship and to suggest ways by which the schools can contribute more effectively to it. It is raising to the level of conscious awareness and deliberate planning many assumptions that have long been taken for granted and unexamined. In doing so it is turning primarily to the academic discipline of political science for many of its concepts and frameworks and, at least by implication, is turning away from history, which has long been assigned the main role in citizenship training in Canadian schools.

What Culture? What Heritage?, which appeared in 1968, was a report on the teaching of Canadian history in schools across the country. (Hodgetts, 1968) It was a devastating indictment. It found the content of history curricula to be outmoded, dull and even dangerous. The textbooks were worse, but even they were better than the atrocious teaching that was said to exist in the great majority of Canadian history classrooms. The report, however, dealt with more than just history teaching and, as a result, had an impact on many people besides teachers. For one thing, it blamed a wide range of institutions for the depressing state of affairs it described: faculties of arts, teacher training institutions, departments of education, school boards, publishers. In other words, if the schools were bad, it was not their fault alone. In addition, the report linked the state of history teaching to questions of citizenship, to the "quality of civic life" in the phrase of its author. As he put it, "The majority of English-speaking high school graduates leave the Canadian Studies classroom without the intellectual skills, the knowledge and the attitudes they should have to play an effective role as citizens in the present-day Canada." (Hodgetts, 1968:116)

In a follow up report entitled *Teaching Canada for the '80s*, Hodgetts (and his co-author Paul Gallagher) suggest an overall framework for a Canadian Studies curriculum designed to enhance what it described as "pan-Canadian understanding" and to produce "the skilled and sensitive public opinion needed to resolve deep-seated difference in the Canadian political community before tension levels became dangerously high." (Hodgetts and Gallagher, 1978:11)

It should be noted at the outset that it is very difficult to generalize about Canadian education because of its great diversity. Canada is a federal state and by its constitution education is reserved to the jurisdiction of the provincial and territorial governments. There is, therefore, no federal office or ministry of education, nor is there a national education policy. The federal government is involved in education *de facto* through the support of research, transfers of

monies to the provinces for support of higher education, educational activities in prisons, the armed services, Indian reserves, and so on. However, constitutionally and in fact, education policies and programs are controlled by the ten provincial and two territorial governments. In addition, large cities such as Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver, though technically subject to provincial control, often tend to go their own way.

Despite this, there is a fair degree of similarity across the different systems. Each province or territory has a ministry or department of education which establishes and controls curricula, textbook authorization, teacher certification, financial subsidies to local areas, and so on. These policies are, in turn, administered by local school boards, consisting of school trustees elected by the residents of each school district or appointed by the provincial government. Children usually begin school at six years of age and progress through grades until they reach the minimum leaving age of sixteen, although the majority now remain at school until seventeen or eighteen. Provincial curricula do not vary all that much, consisting of traditional subjects such as history, geography, languages, literature, science, mathematics and the rest, although they are combined and sequenced differently in different places. Given the diversity of Canada, there are exceptions to all of this, but it does describe the general pattern.

Political Education in Atlantic Canada

Only a few students actually take courses in politics during their school careers in Atlantic Canada, although almost all of them study at least one topic or unit or work dealing with a political theme. Most often this consists of a more or less descriptive treatment of government and political institutions combined with some attempt to explain Canadian federalism, parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy – although this last generally gets short shrift: impressionistic evidence suggests that most school students think of Queen Elizabeth as the Queen of England rather than of Canada. In addition to this, most students will get some grounding, either formally or otherwise, in current events.

In addition to the traditional history courses, there are a number of special courses in Atlantic Canada which can be considered political education courses. The most comprehensive program in political education is the series of courses offered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education in their social studies program. The courses include a required one entitled *Democracy* with almost 10,000 students in 160 schools enrolled at the second year of senior high school (grade 10-11). Topics include: the meaning of democracy;

organized political activity (political parties, interest groups, voting); the structure of Canadian Government; and the federal system. Through a process of group discussion, debate, essay-writing, role-playing, interviews, etc., the students are provided with ample opportunity for independent investigation. The "eclectic approach, which emphasizes a variety of methods, is preferred, so that differences in student abilities and interests are satisfied, and the goal of reflective thinking is realized in every student." (Newfoundland Department of Education, 1982:8). Clearly, this outline has been influenced by the political education/political literacy movement. Indeed, under the title of course objectives are enumerated lists of knowledge, value, and skill objectives almost identical to those usually identified as components of political literacy.

A *Canadian Issues* course at the first year of senior high school is offered in 91 Newfoundland schools and has an enrolment in excess of 1700 students. One of the topics, "The Newfoundland and Labrador Fishery" is required, while the students must select an additional three topics from a list ranging from "Canada's Law," "French-English relations," "Labour and Management in Canada," "Minority Groups in Canada," "Canada-American relations," and "The Future" (questions of population, technology, life styles, etc.). Organized in a similar manner to the *Democracy* course, there are 110-120 hours of instruction. Clearly, these courses plus others on *Consumer Studies, Cultural Heritage, Canadian Economy, Canadian Law,* and *World Law* have the potential of offering a substantial training in political education to the majority of students in this province. (Newfoundland Department of Education, n.d.)

The other extreme in Atlantic Canada is found in New Brunswick, where political education is very sparse. Two elective courses at the grade 12 level are offered. The *Canadian and Comparative Government* course is offered in only 10 of 50 schools and has a total enrolment of 350 students. This course is designed for students who are in the college preparatory program. The other course, *World Issues* is designed for general and occupational students and has no more than 460 students enrolled. Considering the fact that over 25 per cent of seventeen-year-olds in New Brunswick do not remain in school, a significant number of students do not even have potential exposure to these courses.

In between these two extremes lie the programs in political education offered by the Departments of Education of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. In Prince Edward Island there are two Political Science courses: one at the grade 10 level and the other at grade 11. The grade 10 level course with 310 students examines man and his communities, basic forms of government, and the structure and processes of Canadian government. For the most part it is

passively oriented with only minimal opportunity for an active role involving the students. The grade 11 course (139 students) on *Canada's Political System* covers the background of national and third parties, party leadership and regional politics. Again, it has the faults of the grade 11 course in that it more closely represents a university lecture course than a political education course. A newer course, *Law*, offered at the grade 11-12 level seems to have supplanted the two political science courses in popularity. This course, with 670 enrolment, covers a variety of legal topics from criminal and civil law to property and family law. The course utilizes a variety of methodologies, from lectures to small group work, to mock trials.

In Nova Scotia, the situation is as bad. Less than two per cent of the students in Grade twelve take the *Political Science* course (865 students), while another 2,300 take the *Modern World Problems* course. Both of these courses are lecture-oriented with little opportunity for active participation by the students. Indeed, the political science course offered at the grade 12 level is so similar in content to what is offered in the introductory politics course at my university, that we exempt students from taking our required course if they have had the grade twelve course!

A further depressing note on political science and political education courses offered in the Atlantic Provinces is that few of the teachers have taken either Political Science courses at University or teacher training courses in Political Science. Almost all have come from a traditional History and Social Studies background.

A new course on *Maritime Studies* is currently being created which will be required of all grade 9 students in the Maritime Provinces. A product of the Council of Maritime Premiers negotiations, this course is intended to redress the imbalance created in Canadian studies by lack of attention to the Maritimes. A textbook (with the collaboration of more than two dozen people) is in the final stages of writing. Unfortunately, this course will reflect the problems of the other 'political education' courses in Atlantic Canada. A great deal of passivity is expected of the students. The result will probably be another course disliked by students, yet praised by the Departments of Education for its citizenship potential.

Conclusion

Although most students do not study politics in any formal way, they do receive a great deal of political education, with particular emphasis on civics and citizenship as defined in the preceding section of this chapter. In particular, Canadian schools have long been concerned with promoting a sense of Canadianism and, more generally, a sense

of citizenship, of what it means to be a good or "responsible" (to use a favourite word of curriculum documents) citizen.

The use of the schools to promote a sense of Canadianism is not surprising, given the particular historical context of Canada. Of vast size, regionally divided, inevitably multicultural, peopled largely by successive waves of immigrants, Canada's unity is not something which can always be taken for granted. Thus, the schools early came to be seen as a means of promoting either Canadian unity or, at the very least, a Canadian identity. As one prominent Canadian, Vincent Massey, put it in 1926: "To our schools we must look for the good Canadian." (Milburn, 1972:100)

Be it through History, Canadian Studies, Science or some other subject, an important goal of political education in Canadian schools is to cultivate a sense of nationhood, to strengthen students' attachment to the political community. Besides this concern for nationhood and national sentiment, the schools also promote a sense of general citizenship, emphasizing particular attitudes and virtues over others. Ironically, many teachers do not see this as political at all, subscribing, as they do, to the widespread Canadian myth that education is not political in any sense. In reality, of course, the curriculum is not neutral. It is designed to present a particular view of the world to youngsters. It is obvious that not everything can be included in one curriculum, that the curriculum represents a selection from the culture. What is perhaps not so obvious is who in fact makes that selection and for what purposes.

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Chapitre 7:

L'apprentissage politique des jeunes Québécois dans les écoles

Jean Mercier

Dans l'enseignement de la politique, c'est-à-dire dans l'enseignement des règles de la vie publique et des modes de résolution des conflits, nous avons noté trois courants assez distincts. Un premier courant que nous appellerons "traditionnel" vise à faire connaître aux étudiants les structures politiques et les institutions en évitant, autant que possible, les aspects conflictuels de la politique ou les sujets controversés. C'est une éducation politique qui donne une image quelque peu idéalisée du bon citoyen dont la participation politique ultime est le vote aux élections. Conley et Osborne (1983) ont parfois associé ce courant aux cours de "civics" qu'on a donnés dans plusieurs systèmes éducatifs en Amérique du Nord.

Un second courant, que nous appellerons "innovateur" et qui est aussi décrit par Conley et Osborne, privilégie la compréhension du système politique et ne néglige ni la vie politique informelle ni l'analyse du conflit. Ce courant s'est développé durant les années 1960 et 1970, à la faveur des remises en question qui prévalaient à cette époque. Un troisième courant, que nous appellerons "néo-normatif", se présente à nous depuis le début des années 1980 et marque un renversement de tendances dans plusieurs pays. Renversement de tendances où s'effectue un retour en force des éléments normatifs dans l'éducation politique. Les notions reliées au civisme ont pris une nouvelle importance.

Dans son énoncé de politique et dans son plan d'action, le ministère de l'Éducation du gouvernement du Québec énumère une

série de valeurs qui sont consciemment véhiculées à l'intérieur du système d'éducation (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1979). Ces valeurs sont d'ordre intellectuel, esthétique, social et culturel, moral, spirituel et religieux. Les valeurs sociales et culturelles nous indiquent de façon générale l'orientation donnée à l'éducation politique des jeunes Québécois. On y retrouve les éléments suivants: le sens de l'appartenance socio-culturelle, le sens démocratique, le respect des droits et devoirs des citoyens, l'esprit d'équipe et la capacité de travailler en équipe, la reconnaissance des aspirations collectives, le goût du patrimoine et le souci d'une langue correcte.

Ces valeurs imprègnent tous les programmes et plus particulièrement certains d'entre eux que nous retiendrons pour analyse. Nous constatons qu'il n'existe ni programme officiel attitré à l'éducation politique ou civique, ni matériel didactique portant exclusivement sur le sujet. Par conséquent, nous trouverons implicitement à l'intérieur des programmes dont les objectifs pédagogiques ne visent pas officiellement l'éducation politique certains éléments qui l'impliquent d'une manière évidente.

Ainsi, les programmes suivants, sans être exclusivement consacrés au politique, contiennent des éléments importants d'éducation politique et civique: les programmes de formation personnelle et sociale, de formation morale, d'enseignement religieux, de sciences humaines, d'histoire générale, de géographie du Québec et du Canada, d'histoire du Québec et du Canada et d'éducation économique participent donc à l'éducation politique des jeunes. D'autres programmes obligatoires tels que le français, l'économie familiale, le choix de carrière, sont aussi susceptibles de contribuer. Certains cours à option enseignés surtour à la cinquième année du secondaire, par exemple, l'histoire contemporaine, la géographie ou l'initiation au droit, peuvent aussi constituer des sources d'éducation politique.

Suite à cet examen des politiques et des objectifs généraux du ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, nous sommes en mesure de conclure que, malgré le fait qu'il n'existe pas de programme spécifique d'éducation politique et que les valeurs sociales et culturelles véhiculées par le système d'éducation apparaissent parfois traditionnelles (normes, règles, droits et devoirs de citoyens, goût du patrimoine, identité culturelle, etc.), les énoncés généraux des programmes ouvrent la voie à une approche dite innovatrice de l'éducation politique. Les thèmes mentionnés dans les objectifs des programmes que nous avons cités parlent de compréhension de l'organisation sociale, de mieux-vivre ensemble, de participation constructive à la vie en société, de distanciation par rapport à l'événement, de résistance aux conditionnements sociaux, de diversité

et de pluralité sociales, de solidarités, de conflits et d'analyse de choix de société.

Cependant, pour se faire une idée plus précise de l'éducation politique des jeunes Québécois, nous avons dû aller au-delà des énoncés généraux d'objectifs du Ministère. Nous avons examiné de plus près le contenu de chacun des programmes. Pour réaliser cet examen, nous avons utilisé une grille d'analyse qui distinguera les éléments de programme selon trois catégories distinctes, catégories qui correspondent à peu près, sans être identiques, aux trois courants d'enseignement décrits plus tôt:

1) Les éléments des programmes qui visent à développer un sens de l'identité nationale et une connaissance des institutions canadiennes et québécoises.

2) Les éléments des programmes qui sensibilisent les étudiants aux thèmes contemporains de la politique.

3) Les éléments des programmes qui visent à développer chez l'élève un sens de l'éthique sociale et du civisme.

L'identité nationale et la connaissance des institutions politiques canadiennes et québécoises réfèrent aux éléments des programmes qui inciteront l'élève à prendre conscience qu'il est membre d'une société politique particulière. Il sera question du sentiment d'appartenance, de conscience collective, de nationalité, de patrimoine, de culture, etc. Aussi, la connaissance des institutions politiques canadiennes et québécoises suppose une familiarisation plus théorique avec le système politique: le(s) parlement(s), le mode de scrutin, les lois, les rôles de l'État, les biens et services, etc.

Les éléments liés aux *thèmes contemporains de la politique* visent une connaissance des sujets de l'actualité. Ce sont les problèmes que vivent la majorité des sociétés dans le monde: l'environnement, la menace nucléaire, les rapports hommes-femmes, est-ouest, nord-sud, la discrimination sous toutes ses formes, l'exploitation, la violence, etc.

La troisième catégorie est plus difficile à circonscrire. Qu'est-ce que *l'éthique sociale et le civisme*? L'éthique est souvent confondue avec la morale, référant ainsi à une distinction entre le bien et le mal. De plus en plus, elle se distingue de celle-ci par le questionnement qu'elle présuppose sur les devoirs et obligations édictés par la loi morale. L'éthique devient une science de la morale. En raison du caractère spécifique de notre analyse, nous avons besoin d'une définition plus précise par rapport à l'éducation politique. Nous considérerons l'éthique comme l'"ensemble des normes (coutumes,

moeurs, philosophie) acceptées par le groupe social. Elles ne sont pas écrites mais sanctionnées par la réprobation sociale et observées du fait de la pression qu'elle exerce sur les sociétés évolués" (Grawitz, 1981:144). Comme le civisme, l'éthique réfère à un questionnement sur le rôle social tenu par le citoyen confronté à des attentes bien précises de la société. Pour l'élève, l'éthique sociale et le civisme l'amènent à réfléchir sur les conséquences des actes qu'il pose sur son environnement physique et social.

Pour chacun des ordres d'enseignement du système préuniversitaire d'éducation québécoise (primaire, secondaire, collégial) nous chercherons les éléments d'éducation politique enseignés selon des catégories.

L'éducation politique au primaire

Même si les premières années du primaire n'ont pas un contenu d'éducation politique très élaboré, il reste que l'enfant sera mis en contact avec des réalités politiques bien concrètes dès l'âge de neuf ans et surtout à onze ans. *La structure politique du Canada* reçoit une attention toute particulière en mettant l'accent sur le gouvernement municipal qui apparaît plus près de l'élève. Quelques thèmes contemporains s'avèrent être un aspect très intéressant du programme. Enfin, du point de vue de *l'éthique sociale du civisme*, le respect des autres est la notion principalement retenue.

À prime abord, il semblerait que la première catégorie (identité nationale et connaissance des institutions) soit favorisée au détriment des deux autres, ce qui pourrait nous amener à conclure que l'éducation politique au primaire est enseignée selon une approche dite traditionnelle. Ce qui, par contre, nous incite à émettre quelques réserves, c'est la tendance des programmes à équilibrer la connaissance du système politique formel avec celle du système politique informel (groupes de pression, syndicats, coopératives, etc.). Il ne faut pas passer sous silence l'analyse d'un événement à partir de l'actualité, ce qui présente une approche pédagogique plutôt innovatrice.

En résumé, nous considérons que l'approche innovatrice qui était annoncée par les objectifs généraux des programmes ne se retrouve pas toujours dans les objectifs d'études particuliers. Néanmoins, la situation n'est pas telle que l'on doive qualifier de traditionnelle l'approche de l'éducation politique au Québec. La présentation des éléments d'éducation politique du secondaire pourra peut-être nous éclairer davantage.

L'éducation politique au secondaire

Alors que le premier cycle appuie grandement son éducation politique sur des thèmes plutôt abstraits, le deuxième cycle du secondaire présente une approche différente: l'éducation politique de l'étudiant se construit à partir d'un regard sur lui-même, la géographie, l'histoire, l'économie et le système juridique. Il est évident que la formation d'une identité nationale et la conscience des institutions politiques canadiennes et québécoises est la catégorie la plus favorisée. Cette constatation implique-t elle, une approche traditionnelle de l'éducation politique? (Conley et Osborne, 1983).

Si les programmes du primaire s'éloignaient quelque peu d'une approche dite innovatrice, le secondaire élargit encore davantage le fossé, s'acheminant incontestablement vers une approche dite traditionnelle de l'enseignement en éducation politique. Il nous suffit de regarder l'importance accordée aux aspects descriptifs des gouvernements, aux structures politiques et aux institutions, qui dominent la plupart des programmes du second cycle pour s'en convaincre.

Néanmoins, il existe une présentation des structures politiques qui peut s'apparenter à une approche dite innovatrice. Ainsi, la notion de conflit, pouvant survenir au sein des structures et des société, est facilement observable, particulièrement en ce qui a trait à la dualité nationale du Canada à l'intérieur des cours d'histoire à la deuxième et à la quatrième années du secondaire. Les milieux où s'exerce la politique informelle (les groupes de pression, les syndicats et les associations de citoyens) reçoivent aussi une certaine part d'attention dans la plupart des programmes que nous avons examinés.

L'éthique sociale et le civisme est la catégorie sous-développée du second cycle du secondaire. Un thème sur le vandalisme (Ministère d'Éducation, 1984), un autre sur les valeurs de justice, d'égalité, de fraternité et d'engagement social à l'égard des problèmes sociaux constituent les éléments d'éducation politique les plus apparentés à cette catégorie.

L'éducation politique au collégial

Le seul cours obligatoire du collégial susceptible de contenir des éléments d'éducation politique est le cours de philosophie "Ethnique et politique". Il est suggéré à l'enseignant d'aborder les sujets suivants:

> "Le fait et le droit, la loi, les fondements et les règles de l'action en société; l'influence des représentations sociales sur le jugement personnel; les théories de l'État; les

rapports sociaux; la lutte des classes; l'idéologique et les idéologies; le rapport de l'idéologique, de l'économique et du politique". (Ministère de l'Éducation, 1983).

Il existe aussi des cours à option qui contiennent des éléments d'éducation politique, comme les cours d'introduction à la vie politique et les systèmes politiques du Québec et du Canada. Mais, somme toute, peu d'étudiants suivent ces cours. La situation n'est pas très différente en ce qui concerne les cours d'histoire, de géographie, d'anthropologie ou de sociologie, dont les contenus comportent des éléments d'éducation politique. La situation est donc semblable à ce qui existe au Canada anglais puisque, comme l'ont démontré Conley et Osborne, "only a few Canadian students take courses in politics or political studies". (Conley et Osborne, 1983:65).

La perception des acteurs

Entre ce qui est écrit dans un programme d'études et ce qui est enseigné dans une salle de cours, il y a souvent une marge considérable. Même s'il est tenu de respecter les objectifs d'apprentissage définis par le ministère de l'Éducation, l'enseignant ou le directeur d'école bénéficie d'une certaine marge de manoeuvre qui lui permet de composer avec les éléments de l'éducation politique. Par conséquent, l'éducation politique prévue dans les programmes et celle dont l'élève profite n'est pas toujours la même. Plusieurs chercheurs ont déjà souligné cet écart. Dans cette section, nous examinerons comment les professeurs, les élèves et d'autres intervenants vivent l'éducation politique des jeunes Québécois.

Nous avons interrogé des directeurs d'école et des enseignants de différents niveaux de la région du Québec sur l'éducation politique à l'intérieur des programmes, ainsi que sur leurs attitudes, sur leur motivation et sur leur propre formation. En général, les enseignants s'entendent pour dire que l'éducation politique répartie à l'intérieur de plusieurs programmes est la meilleure façon de l'enseigner, étant donné l'encombrement des programmes déjà existants et les priorités des parents, des élèves et de la société en général, priorités qui sont orientées davantage vers les programmes de français, de mathématiques et de sciences pures.

Un directeur de la vie pédagogique au secondaire nous confie que le cours de formation personnelle et sociale n'est l'objet que de trente heures d'enseignement dans une année. De plus, il met en doute le fait que ce programme bénéficie de ces heures maximales qui lui sont accordées, car les autres programmes prennent beaucoup de place. Son école se retrouve même dans l'impossibilité de dispenser le programme de formation personnelle et sociale pour les quatrième et

cinquième années du secondaire. Elle compte sur l'histoire et l'éducation économique pour rencontrer les objectifs qui étaient prévus à ce programme pour ces années. D'ailleurs, il émet certaines réserves quant à ce programme d'études; reprendre pendant onze ans les mêmes thèmes à chaque année risque d'ennuyer l'élève déjà embêté par les matières académiques. Il mentionne qu'à son école, l'éducation politique se présente surtout sous la forme d'activités de sensibilisation et d'implication dans le milieu. À l'occasion de l'élection d'un conseil étudiant, certains élèves sont envoyés en stage de leaders où ils apprennent à animer un groupe. Selon ce directeur, c'est à partir de l'organisation sociale à l'intérieur de l'école et d'un souci de former l'esprit critique du jeune que l'on participe au mieux à faire l'éducation politique des jeunes.

Les enseignants des programmes d'histoire, de géographie et de formation morale que nous avons rencontrés se sentaient bousculés par les programmes; beaucoup d'objectifs sont à atteindre en peu de temps et par conséquent il ne reste plus beaucoup de place pour la discussion.

Quelques professeurs qui trouvent le temps de le faire, vont utiliser des sujets de discussion controversés pour provoquer ces jeunes qui, malgré l'accessibilité à l'information par les médais, sont peu ou pas intéressés par la politique.

Les enseignants s'entendent pour affirmer qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'aller dans les détails descriptifs pour donner une bonne éducation politique. Un professeur d'histoire précisait: "C'est lorsqu'on aborde les aspects vraiment politiques de l'histoire qu'on perd les élèves". Un directeur de vie pédagogique, ayant déjà enseigné le programme d'enseignement religieux, est convaincu que le thème consacré à l'engagement socio-politique du programme était celui par lequel les élèves se sentaient le moins concernés.

La perception des jeunes

Les conclusions auxquelles en arrive l'ensemble de la documentation recueillie sur les valeurs sociales, les activités socio-culturelles et les motivations politiques des jeunes se résument dans cette simple phrase:

> "De manière général, ce que les jeunes partagent à l'égard de la politique, ce n'est pas tant un intérêt qu'un désintérêt, celui-ci allant parfois jusqu'au rejet pur et simple" (Gouvernement de Québec, 1985: 31)

Voilà! La grande majorité des jeunes ne connaît que peu ou pas du tout les aspects théoriques (connaissance des institutions) et pratiques

(engagement politique, participation, identité nationale, etc.) de la politique, malgré tous les éléments d'éducation politique rencontrés dans les programmes que nous avons dépouillés. (Demers, Rochais & Tremblay, 1982)

Par ailleurs, nous avons mené un sondage auprès d'un groupe restreint d'étudiants (trente-et-un étudiants de la cinquième année du secondaire et trente-et-un étudiants du collégial), non pour connaître précisément leurs opinions mais plutôt pour avoir une idée générale de ce que ces jeunes pensent des questions qui nous intéressent ici.

À la question: "Est-ce que la politique t'intéresse?", 83% des étudiants de la cinquième secondaire et 70% de ceux du collégial répondent "oui". Pour les étudiants du secondaire, c'est, dans l'ordre, la politique nationale, provinciale, internationale, étudiante et municipale qui les préoccupent. Au Cégep de Limoilou, la politique internationale s'installe au premier rang suivie de la politique nationale, provinciale, municipale et étudiante. (Gélinas, 1986: 71)

Autre constatation, étonnante, celle-là, la majorité des étudiants du secondaire et du collégial confond le système politique canadien et québécois à celui des États-Unis. Ils ont vite oublié le régime parlementaire britannique appris dans les cours d'histoire du Québec et du Canada car seulement onze étudiants sur soixante-deux ont comparé notre système parlementaire à celui de la Grande-Bretagne.' La confusion entre notre système politique et celui des États-Unis peut s'expliquer entre autres par la dépendance géographique ou par l'invasion culturelle des États-Unis. "On est presque rendu des Américains", nous dit un étudiant au secondaire. Nous pouvons constater qu'en effet, les étudiants ont de la difficulté à trouver ce en quoi le Canada est différent des États-Unis.

Lorsqu'on leur demande de préciser l'identité qui les définit le mieux, 6% des étudiants du secondaire se disent Canadiens, 45% Québécois, 45% Canadiens français, et 3% citoyens de la terre. Même en leur offrant trois choix d'identité, autres que celles référant au Canada et au Québec, et même s'ils sont conscients de l'américanisation de notre communauté, la majorité des étudiants se considère toujours comme Canadiens ou Québécois. Les enseignants nous avaient pourtant exprimé certaines craintes à l'effet que leurs étudiants préféreraient avant tout être Américains.

Les sources d'éducation politique des jeunes

Les jeunes du secondaire inscrits au programme d'éducation économique placent l'école au deuxième rang des sources d'information sur la politique, juste après les médias de masse. Chez les étudiants du collégial, le collège vient au troisième rang, après les médias et les parents. Les étudiants du secondaire sont plus

nombreux à estimer que l'école leur a appris suffisamment les rudiments de notre système politique mais aussi nombreux que ceux du collégial à exprimer qu'ils auraient aimé en apprendre davantage. La très grande majorité estime qu'il est utile de connaître le système politique ne serait-ce que pour mieux évaluer l'importance des élections et pour comprendre l'organisation de la société. L'étape de la majorité (dix-huit ans) qui coïncide avec l'acquisition du droit de vote est une étape importante dans la vie du jeune; avant cet âge, il n'y a rien. On est donc peu préparé. Un jeune nous confie: "Dans quelques mois, j'aurai dix-huit ans et je pourrai voter et je ne sais même pas ce que ça veut dire" (étudiant en cinquième année du secondaire de la polyvalente de Loretteville).

Malgré l'existence d'une politique d'éducation du ministère de l'éducation et de programmes d'études au primaire et au secondaire qui contiennent beaucoup d'éléments d'apprentissage politique, on note un véritable malaise chez les intervenants du monde de l'éducation et chez les jeunes sur cette question. Personne ne sait exactement ce qui se fait à l'intérieur d'une salle de classe. Personne ne sait si les objectifs d'éducation politique identifiés dans les programmes seront véritablement rencontrés. Devant cette éducation politique formelle insuffisante, se présente un milieu extra-scolaire dont la société n'arrivera jamais à vérifier l'impact réel sur la socialisation politique des jeunes.

Le milieu extra-scolaire contribue surtout à générer de l'information sur les *thèmes contemporains de la politique*, la seconde catégorie de notre grille d'analyse. Pourtant, même sur ce thème, les jeunes ne sont pas nécessairement bien informés. Paradoxalement, ce pourrait être parce qu'ils le sont trop. Il nous a semblé que dans le bombardement d'informations qu'ils reçoivent, ils n'ont pas toujours les outils pour structurer les informations qui parviennent jusqu'à eux. Beaucoup d'informations s'accumulent ici et là, dans les journaux, à la télévision, mais comment donner un sens, une direction à ces éléments disparates?

Reste donc l'école pour structurer ce flot d'informations disparates. Mais l'école est bousculée à son tour. Bousculée par le nombre de matières à enseigner, par les nouvelles priorités, très justifiables, sur la qualité du français ou sur l'apprentissage des mathématiques ou par les compressions budgétaires.

Conclusion

Nous avons souligné, plus tôt, que les jeunes semblaient s'intéresser peu à la politique. Plusieurs types d'hypothèses peuvent être suggérés pour expliquer ce manque d'intérêt. Une des hypothèses possibles concerne l'émergence de valeurs nouvelles chez les jeunes. Il nous est

apparu, à cet égard, que les jeunes étudiant·s que nous avons rencontrés privilégiaient d'une façon particulière des valeurs comme l'harmonie, l'accord, la paix. Cette nouvelle valorisation de l'harmonie semble se retrouver aussi dans le cadre d'autres recherches. Or, dans notre système de démocratie parlementaire, le conflit est de l'essence même du jeu démocratique. Opposition officielles, débats, compétitions sont autant d'éléments essentiels à la bonne marche de nos institutions. Dans la mesure où les jeunes privilégient moins que leurs aînés les valeurs qui supportent le jeu démocratique, n'est-il pas normal qu'ils s'intéressent moins à la politique?

Le désintérêt apparent pour le politique peut aussi s'expliquer par la situation concrète des jeunes d'aujourd'hui. Les incertitudes socio-économiques, en particulier l'instabilité du marché de l'emploi, n'aident pas les jeunes à se positionner vis-à-vis leur milieu. Et devant des groupements traditionnels qui sont, comme la famille, remis en question et devant de nouvelles solidarités qui sont fragiles ou tardent à se constituer, les jeunes sont dans une sorte de *vacuum*. Ce vacuum, souligne une littérature de plus en plus importante, c'est aussi un *vacuum de normes*, un *vacuum éthique*.

C'est au niveau de *l'éthique sociale et du civisme*, la troisième catégorie de la grille que nous avons proposée, que la formation paraît d'ailleurs être la plus faible. Des auteurs de plus en plus nombreux soulignent que l'apprentissage de cette dimension de la politique ne peut pas s'apprendre de la même manière que les autres dimensions. (Torney-Purta & Schwille, 1983; Van Ijzendoorn, 1983) Au Québec, c'est Claude Trottier qui a exprimé cette opinion le plus clairement:

> "Il semble donc que les cours d'éducation critique ne réussissent pas à transmettre des attitudes de participation politique aux étudiants si ces derniers ne sont pas soumis à des renforcements dans leur environnement immédiat". (Trottier, 1982: 18)

Il s'agit dont ici d'une recommandation qui a trait plus au procédé, à la méthode, qu'au contenu lui-même. Là où cela s'est fait en Angleterre, par exemple, l'école (et non seulement la salle de cours) devient un lieu d'apprentissage de la vie en groupe et de la résolution des conflits.

L'idée de créer des situations de coopération concrète à l'école est peut-être encore plus nécessaire au Canada qu'ailleurs car, contrairement à d'autres pays, il n'y a ici ni service militaire, ni service social obligatoire, ni de véritable tradition, comme il en existe en Suisse, d'effort volontaire collectif. La situation particulière du Québec, à cet égard, n'est pas meilleure que celle de l'ensemble du Canada.

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Chapter 8:

The Contribution of Ontario's Schools to Political Education

John Ricker and Alan Skeoch

The main conclusion of the study reported here is that the political education of most Ontario students is not satisfactory. They neither know nor understand as much about Canada's history, government, and political system as is desirable in young people who are of voting age or soon will be.

Reasons for the general state of ignorance are not hard to identify. Before doing so, it may be useful to state what they are not. We found no evidence of a plot to keep Ontario students ignorant about Canada and the workings of its government. Without exception, teachers and administrators, politicians and civil servants, and a large assortment of official documents acknowledged the desirability and importance of a political education. Nor are teachers of subjects directly related to political education less competent than are their colleagues in other subject areas. It may well be that the academic qualifications of most teachers of history and social science are generally higher than those of most teachers of mathematics and science. Furthermore, there is an abundance of reasonably good instructional material in a variety of media and at various levels of difficulty. Nor do Ministry of Education guidelines – older or as recently revised – ignore the subject. Canadian government and politics has always been included in the curriculum in one way or another.

Why then is the state of student political knowledge so very inadequate? The main reasons that most Ontario students do not

receive a satisfactory political education are that they are not required to have one and that they are not given a reasonable opportunity to get one.

The Curriculum

There are two difficulties in stating precisely what is taught: one is the result of the recent introduction of a new program for the Intermediate and Senior Divisions of the Ontario schools (grades 7 to 12); the other is the need to distinguish between what is available to be taught and what is actually taught and to how many students. The new program, outlined in a circular, *Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions* (OSIS), increases the number of courses required to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), is more prescriptive than previously, and makes possible the completion of the entire elementary and secondary programs in 12 rather than 13 years. New courses known as Ontario Academic Courses (OACs) are designed specifically as university entrance courses. The new program complicates the problem of stating what is available because some of the new courses have yet to be implemented. But the task is not impossible because content is determined to some extent by the nature of the discipline and also because much improved new guidelines are quite prescriptive of content, time allocation, the establishment of specific objectives and suggested appropriate ways to achieve them.

It is more difficult and important to distinguish between what is available and what is actually taught and to whom. Most school courses directly related to Canadian political education are in history and the social sciences. The latter, referred to as Contemporary Studies in the new program, include courses in politics, law, economics, sociology, world religions and native studies. All of these courses are optional and in the past most Ontario students have not selected them. There is little doubt that students who understood 70 per cent of the content of the history, politics and law courses would have a better political education than most Canadians. But most students are not exposed to a fraction of this content. And what they receive is at a junior level and for such a limited period of time that it is unlikely to provide even a superficial political education.

The greatest concentration of courses dealing with Canadian history, government and politics is in the Intermediate Division where there are three courses: *Early Canadian Communities* (Grade 7); *Building the Canadian Nation* (Grade 8); and *Contemporary Canada: Life in the Twentieth Century* (Grade 9 or Grade 10). These are the only compulsory courses in history or social science taught in Ontario schools. In general these courses provide a survey of

Canadian history from earliest times to the present. All other history and social science courses are optional, with the proviso that of the 30 credits (16 compulsory and 14 elective) *one* must be selected from the array of social science courses in the Senior Division in order to qualify for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

In the Senior Division, there are three history courses: *Civilizations in History*; *Twentieth Century World History*; and *American History*. In addition, there are six Contemporary Studies (social sciences) courses: *Economics*; *Law*; *Politics*; *Society: Challenge and Change*; *World Religions*; *Native Studies*. There are two OAC (Ontario Academic Courses) history courses: *Canada in a North American Perspective* and *Modern Western Civilization*; and four Contemporary Studies courses: *Law*; *Politics*; *Economics*; and *Native Studies*. All OACs are designed for students who will attend universities.

In practice, the great majority of Ontario students complete their formal political education by the end of Grade 9 or 10. Most is received at the elementary school level before they are intellectually mature. We think that the compulsory courses in the Intermediate Division do not give students a sound political education nor do they provide an adequate basis for acquiring one. This is not a criticism of the courses or guidelines *per se*. They are not *meant* to provide a serious political education; the main goal is *not* to try to ensure an understanding of Canada's political or constitutional history or system of government. The guideline makes clear that the emphasis is to be on social history. A sample unit dealing with confederation, a subject of some importance to an understanding of how Canada functions, states that "the emphasis in this unit should be on the growing interdependence of the colonial communities and the *stories* of significant personalities *rather than on the political and constitutional complexities of the times*." (our emphasis)

The result of this avoidance of political issues and context is that when students undertake the specific study of the Canadian political system in the compulsory history course in Grade 9 or Grade 10, most will lack the historical perspective essential to a basic understanding of that system. And this is the only compulsory course in the entire curriculum with a unit dealing specifically with Canadian government and law. Designed in part to ensure that all students "develop an understanding of the Canadian political and legal system and an appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in Canadian society", this unit, *Citizenship: Government and Law*, will be the first and last direct exposure that most Ontario students have to the formal study of Canadian government and politics. The list of objectives for this unit, as well as a proposed outline of content, is reasonable and appropriate and could provide the basis for acquiring a

respectable political education. But this unit is only part of the course, allotted only 15 per cent of available instructional time. This means that most Ontario students receive no more than 15 to 18 hours of formal instruction about the Canadian political and legal system in their school lives. And this instruction takes place on the basis of courses that have deliberately avoided political and constitutional complexities.

The Students

Enrolment figures provided by the Research and Information Branch, Statistical Information Services of the Ministry of Education provide an overview of student exposure to courses with significant political education content. Our conclusions based on these data may be summarized as follows:

1. After Grade 10, when all courses in Canadian history, politics, government and law become optional, enrolment in them declines dramatically.

2. In all grades in the Senior Division, courses in English and mathematics have much higher enrolments than courses in history and the social sciences. In Grades 11 and 12, comparative enrolment figures between English (compulsory) and history/social sciences (optional) show that about two hundred thousand more students take English than history. Two hundred and thirty thousand more students study English than law, and two hundred and forty thousand more study English than politics. (All figures are approximate.)

3. In Grades 11 and 12, comparative enrolment figures between mathematics and history/social sciences, all optional subjects, shows that mathematics attracts more than double the number of students than does history.

4. In Grade 13, where English, mathematics and history are optional, the pattern is the same with history at the low end of the scale.

5. Enrolment in social science courses with high political education content is comparatively very low and likely to remain so in the future. The most popular social science course in the Senior Division is Man In Society, essentially an introductory sociology course, in which the combined Grade 11 and 12 enrolment was 49,139.

6. Declining or low enrolment in history and social science courses is likely to adversely affect the way some teachers approach the teaching of these subjects, increasing pressure to retain or attract students by adopting a less rigorous approach or by lowering standards generally, or both.

The Results

Provincial Review Reports on the state of knowledge in history and the social sciences are useful in providing a general picture but are not comprehensive. And they refer to curricula that have been revised. Our observations are similarly general in nature. Most examination papers we were able to obtain emphasized content. Although the form of questions often suggested that answers were to be "reached," they usually required only that answers be "retrieved." Marked papers awarded most marks for reproducing remembered facts, ideas or generalizations. There is, of course, nothing wrong with remembering, but material that is merely memorized is not likely to be long retained nor will it lead to understanding.

In the absence of much hard evidence, we interviewed a number of teachers who had much experience teaching about Canadian government and politics and history. All were dissatisfied with their effectiveness. The following is typical of most of the comments. They were made by a teacher of history with a graduate degree, specialist certification, a head of a department with 23 years teaching experience.

> I don't think we do a very good job in ensuring that students get an adequate political education. Certainly, politics is never a popular part of the history course and I have to remind the teachers in my department that it's obligatory. Otherwise they wouldn't teach it. Some teachers try very hard to avoid teaching about government and politics simply because students are not interested in these topics. And getting students to like your course is a big part of being a successful history teacher. Remember, only one history course is compulsory in Ontario schools. In my opinion, few students would ever take another one in school if we emphasized political education. I don't think the situation will change until the history curriculum and the politics and government sections are more prescriptive and more realistic in terms of instructional time. At present, teachers can and do avoid coming to grips with political education in a serious way.

To investigate the extent of simple political knowledge, we did a rapid small-scale factual survey among students of above average ability from five Ontario Collegiate Institutes. Here is a summary of some of the results with students at Grade 9/10 level prior to studying the government section of the history course.

1 of 42 knew the name of the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario

9 of 42 knew the name of the Premier of Ontario

9 of 42 knew the name of the Governor General

0 of 42 new the name of the Premier of Quebec or of British Columbia

4 of 42 knew the name of the federal Minister of Finance

14 of 42 knew the name of the leader of the federal Liberal party

8 of 42 knew the name of the federal leader of the NDP

17 of 42 believed that Canada was a republic

20 of 42 believed that the Governor General, the House of Commons and the Senate were elected

3 of 23 knew what M.P. stood for

3 of 23 knew what M.P.P. stood for

4 of 23 knew what B.N.A. stood for

5 of 23 knew what R.C.M.P. stood for

Results from students in the senior grades, mainly from Grade 13, were as follows:

31 of 70 knew the name of the Premier of Ontario

10 of 70 knew the name of the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario

21 of 70 knew the name of the Governor General

8 of 70 knew the name of the Premier of Quebec

2 of 70 knew the name of the Premier of British Columbia

4 of 70 knew the name of the federal Minister of Finance

50 of 70 knew that the Progressive Conservatives are in power in Ottawa

27 of 48 knew that the Liberal party is in power in Ontario

30 of 70 thought that the Governor General, the members of the Commons and Senate are elected

40 of 70 believe that Canada is not a republic, monarchy or a constitutional monarchy

We also asked the Grade 9/10 students to construct diagrams illustrating how the Canadian parliamentary system works. Representative of those efforts that were remotely intelligible are the following:

Student A identified in descending order "The Senate, the general Governor, The house of commons, The cabinet ministers." The student explained their interactions: "There is a house of commons or the cabinet ministers. They elect an general Governor. He is under the senate. They have meetings and the house of commons makes decisions with the approval of the General Governor, the decision they make if approved by the Senate is Law. If he doesn't approve and doesn't sign the document where the decision is written, then the document is sent back. That means the House of Commons have to make a different decision. The parliament is under the Prime Minister and he could make the Final Approval if he wants."

Student B sketched the Parliament Buildings with Brian Mulroney on the steps smiling broadly. In parliament "important documents or bills get passed on from member to member, eventually winds up with Brian Mulroney. Brian makes most of the major decisions for our country. His signature makes things OFFICIAL. There is also the Senate, the House of Commons, and the Premier, the Lt. Govt and other members of Parliament. Each of this members of elected and this is how parliament works."

Student C outlined the essentials: "Brian Mulroney speaks to the court. The court sends out new law. LAW goes to the people."

Student D pictured a four-part system with "a Governor General appointed by a King or Queen, Cabinet members appointed by Senate, the Senate elected by people (voters), allowed by age."

Student E diagrammed a system headed by a "Lutenent Governor" under whom was "a Prime Minister, Senit, and a house of commons made up of Reprisenttives from the Provences in which they won in."

Student F sketched an elaborate system with City Hall at the base. City Hall passes demands from the people to a body called "All the Parties" which passes on "stuff" either to a Prime Minister or to a Premier, who passes it on to the Governor General who sends it to the House of Commons from whence "everything goes to the Senate for approval. If approved then everything goes back down to City Hall."

We do not suggest that these examples prove anything about the general state of political education in Ontario. The tests are primitive and the sample of students small. There are undoubtedly students who are more knowledgeable about our system of government. We did not encounter them. Nor did we see test or examination papers written by them. Our conclusion that the political education of most Ontario students is deficient was, however, reinforced by the test results.

Conclusions

Our main conclusion is that the contribution of Ontario schools to the political education of students has not been very effective. It is likely to remain inadequate unless there are basic changes. The main reason for the lack of effectiveness is the insufficient time provided in the curriculum for a satisfactory study of Canadian government and politics. The segment of the course directly concerned with the topic is allotted 15 per cent of the available instructional time – 15 to 18 hours – in what for most Ontario students will be their final and only serious exposure to the topic in the schools.

The compulsory courses in Canadian history in Grades 7 and 8 are not intended to, nor do they, provide an adequate background for a serious study of government. By its nature, the study of government has to be serious; it cannot be made easy. Enjoyment for students has to come from mastering something difficult. And this may not be the kind of fun that attracts students to courses they do not have to take. All courses in history and the social sciences at the Senior and OAC levels are optional. The consequence is that with the exception of one history/contemporary studies course at the Senior level required for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), most Ontario students will not study courses related to political education after Grade 9 or 10. Since their exposure at that level tends to be superficial, most students leave secondary schools in a state of ignorance and confusion about the history and government of Canada. And enrolment figures in Senior division history/contemporary studies courses indicate that most students remain generally unaware of and unconcerned about the history, government and cultures of other nations and peoples.

We believe that students *should not graduate* from secondary school without having been required to demonstrate that they have a basic understanding of why there is a Canada, and how it is governed. For this reason, we think that history, like English, should be mandatory in the grades of the Senior Division, and that one history course at this level should be on the history and government of Canada. We make this statement in the full knowledge of the enormous pressure on ministry officials and politicians to add all sorts of worthwhile ingredients to the curriculum. Such pressure is no reason to avoid doing whatever is required to ensure that as many students as possible leave school reasonably well equipped to function as responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Chapter 9:

Political Education in the Schools of Western Canada

Ken Osborne

At the very beginning, a distinction must be made between political education and the teaching of politics. In the school setting, all education is political in that it is intended to produce a certain kind of person, one who will be equipped with the skills and dispositions to live an independent life, for example, through getting a job, thinking critically, being literate, and so on, while at the same time fulfilling social obligations and responsibilities: "The ultimate aim of education is to develop the abilities of the individual in order to fulfill personal aspirations while making a positive contribution to society." (Alberta Program of Studies, 1978:2). Provincial statements and educational goals constantly emphasize the point that education must serve the needs of the individual and of society, though these needs are regarded as non-problematic, are rarely specified and are assumed to be easily compatible.

The catch-all word for this, of course, is 'citizenship' and this remains the primary goal of school systems in western Canada. It would be redundant to cite the relevant documents from all the provinces since they say much the same thing, but here is an example from Alberta, describing the "guiding principles" of secondary education in that province.

- a respect for the unique nature and worth of each individual

- a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, learning and excellence
- a commitment to meaningful participation in our democratic society
- a commitment to educating young people to assume responsibility for themselves and for the future direction of society (Alberta, 1985:7)

The citizenship thrust of statements like this needs no elaboration, beyond noting the attempt to combine individual and social needs with academic and social learning.

However, even though the school system as a whole must be seen as a vehicle of political education, when school-people begin to think specifically of citizenship and its implications for the classroom they turn primarily to the social studies curriculum. And in every province except Manitoba, this means not history and geography but social studies – an interdisciplinary mixture of themes, topics and problems drawn from all the social sciences and from contemporary issues. Only Manitoba has retained history and geography as the organizing bases of its program and even then not totally so. The western provinces make an explicit link between social studies and citizenship. British Columbia says that "the overall theme of social studies is one of responsible citizenship." (British Columbia, 1985:77) Saskatchewan agrees: "Social Studies education encompasses the development of desirable personal, social and civic behaviour." The same sentiments are to be found in Alberta: "Effective Citizenship is the ultimate goal of social studies." (Alberta 1978:233)

None of this is unique to the western provinces, although the citizenship tradition has particularly strong roots there in view of the concern of educators from the very beginning to Canadianize immigrants and to produce a new Canadian nationality. In her survey of provincial social studies curricula throughout the country, Redden found a similar emphasis. In her words: "The major goal of the social studies programs of all the provinces appears to be to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values and thought processes which will enable them to participate effectively and responsibly in the ever-changing environment of their community, their country and the world." (Redden, 1982:4)

It is possible to identify the main strands of the concept of citizenship which curricula in the western provinces all share. They all speak of independence or autonomy, envisaging the ideal citizens to be those who make up their own minds, who are not easily swayed or manipulated, who follow the dictates of reason and conscience. They also speak of involvement or participation, seeing the ideal

citizen as someone who is knowledgeable about and involved in both the local community and in wider provincial and National affairs, though this involvement is usually qualified by the word 'responsible'. They all include issues, or controversial issues – indeed, Alberta deliberately builds them into its curriculum – arguing that students must be informed about and equipped for the problems and conflicts which are at the heart of political debate. As the Alberta curriculum puts it: "Social Studies has been defined as the school subject in which students learn to explore and where possible to resolve social issues that are of public and personal concern." (Alberta, 1981:I)

For this reason, they also emphasize skills, which are seen as important not only for citizenship reasons but also because they are a central part of the schools' traditional academic task. These skills are the usual ones of communication, research and critical thinking, usually supplemented by what are described as social or interpersonal skills, for schools are insistent upon the importance of students living and working together without friction. British Columbia has gone further and included in its program of studies specific "citizenship skills," which are defined as self-worth, interpersonal relations, group and discussion skills, and leadership. (British Columbia, 1983:15) Alberta lists "participation skills," and Manitoba speaks of "social participation skills", but, upon elaboration, they prove to deal mainly with group-work and other forms of participation in the classroom although there is a reference to "participating actively in society." (Manitoba, 1981:3) What is notable about all these listings of skills is that, despite their emphasis on participation and citizenship, they are in fact restricted to classroom processes and rarely deal with actual participation in the real world of politics outside the school.

Besides skills, school curricula pay explicit attention to values, often in terms of helping students to explore value-issues and to arrive at defensible value-systems. The core values of citizenship education in the western provinces can be identified as tolerance, cooperation, fair play, moderation, rationality, and critical thought. This Alberta statement reflects the curricula of all the western provinces: "within the secondary school context, the development of desirable personal characteristics such as integrity, honesty, fairness, generosity, self-esteem, respect for others, responsibility for one's actions, a sense of justice, tolerance, open-mindedness, respect for the environment, sharing, stewardship, and cooperation should be fostered." (Alberta, 1985:17) This conception of citizenship is obviously an ambitious one and perhaps one that schools can never achieve. Certainly, the data on political efficacy, participation and cynicism suggest that schools still have a long way to go. Nevertheless, the goals are there and it remains to be seen how the schools are supposed to achieve them.

The main vehicle in this regard is, of course, the program of studies and its accompanying textbooks and related materials. So far as the former is concerned, the western provinces pursue by and large a common path, so that it is not necessary to describe each province's programs separately. The teaching of politics begins, even though it is not identified as such, in the very early grades, where all the provinces pursue an "expanding horizons" approach beginning with the study of families and moving through the local community to communities around the world. There are obvious political lessons in all this, but students do not study a full-blown unit on politics and government until Grade 5 or 6, when they are introduced to the structure and chief institutions of the Canadian political system, focussing on the three levels of government, voting and elections, the parliamentary system and rights and responsibilities.

In all provinces, this is followed by either a substantial unit or a whole course on Canadian government and politics in the junior high/middle school years. In British Columbia there is a substantial topic in Grade 9 entitled *Nation-building and Social Order*, which, although it deals primarily with eighteenth and nineteenth century European history, covers a good deal of political ground. In Alberta, the grade 8 program is entitled *People and Their Institutions*, and roughly two-thirds of it deals with Canadian topics: "particular emphasis is placed on the ways in which the selected institutions affect the lives of Canadians, and ways that young people can create constructive relationships with basic institutions." (Alberta, 1981:62) In Saskatchewan there are units dealing with decision-making, power, authority and citizenship in grades 7 and 8. In Manitoba the grade 9 Canadian Studies course devotes a good deal of attention to the topics of citizenship and immigration, Canadian identity, and the Canadian political, legal and economic systems.

All the provinces do more with politics and government in the high school. British Columbia's grade 11 program carries the self-explanatory title, *Government, Law, Politics and Social Issues*. Alberta's grade 10 program is called *Participatory Citizenship* and deals primarily with human rights, Canadian unity and Canada's relations with the rest of the world. In Saskatchewan, where curriculum revision is now under way, it is planned to devote the grade 10 program to *Social Organization* and the grade 12 to *Canadian Studies*. Manitoba does not give politics quite this prominence, in keeping with its emphasis on history and geography, but its grade 11 course in Canadian history has *Government and Politics* as one of its major units. In all the western provinces, there is at least one elective course in the senior high school on world problems.

In addition to these compulsory courses, two provinces – Alberta and Manitoba – have optional high school courses in political science which essentially adapt the elements of the academic discipline of political science to a high school audience. They are not so much courses in political education as in the academic study of politics. Whatever their merits, they are apparently not popular. In Manitoba, no schools actually offer them and in Alberta only two do.

Although the social studies/history program carries the main burden of the teaching of politics, it is to some extent also done through other subjects. In all provinces, for example, literature courses use such books as *Animal Farm, Two Solitudes, Brave New World, On the Beach, In the Heat of the Night* and others, which have obvious political relevance. There is a trend also to include in science courses an analysis of issues arising from the place of science and technology in society, thus embracing such politically relevant topics as acid rain, nuclear power, population growth and others. Home economics and consumer education courses often deal with issues of marketing, advertising, consumption and so on which raise political questions. In all provinces there is a growing trend towards including the study of law and the legal system in the curriculum, thus embracing such politically relevant topics as human rights, the constitution, racism, sexual equality and others. And this does not at all take into account what teachers introduce into the classroom on their own initiative. To take only one example, in all four provinces there are groups of teachers involved in peace education, with the British Columbia Teachers' Education and, to a lesser extent, the Manitoba Teachers' Society being particularly active.

Provincial curricula, then, give adequate attention to the teaching of politics. One may quarrel with the way in which particular units are organized or material is presented, but the subject is certainly not ignored. In general terms, these aspects of politics are included in all curricula: political institutions; the constitution; the structure of government at federal, provincial and municipal levels; law; contemporary problems; human rights; citizenship; multiculturalism; and individual rights and responsibilities. Throughout, the emphasis is upon the importance of informed, responsible, participant citizenship. The Saskatchewan curriculum is representative of all: "The fundamental aim of the social studies programme is to help students to participate responsibly in a world of interdependent peoples, communities and nations." (Saskatchewan, 1983:18)

Ample attention is also given to the Canadian aspects of politics. At least half of the course content from grades 1 to 12 in all the provinces is Canadian. Indeed, it may be that the pendulum has swung too far. In Manitoba, for example, the social studies program in grades 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11 is Canadian, leaving only grades 7 and 8,

with some optional courses in grade 12, to deal with the rest of the world. One of the challenges facing Canadian political education in the coming years will be to incorporate into it those non-Canadian elements without which one can hardly be considered to be politically literate today. At the moment, school curricula pay only minimal attention to such topics as the Soviet Union, the United Nations, communism, the Middle East, disarmament and all those issues of international importance which feature so prominently on the world's political agenda.

Topics to which not all that much attention is given include political theory; political behaviour; ideology; alternative systems (e.g. anarchism, fascism and so on); international issues; and the connection between politics and social class. Such topics are not totally ignored and it is obviously a matter of personal judgment to decide whether or not they are adequately treated, but it is hard to avoid the impression that the teaching of politics, as outlined in provincial curricula, essentially takes the political system as given and encourages students to make it work better, whether this means more efficiently, more fairly, more smoothly or whatever.

The most widely used politics text in the western provinces at the grades 5 and 6 level, for example, is entitled *Working for Canadians*, which describes government as "you and others working together to meet some of your needs." (Marchand, 1979:4) Its message is consensual: the system is there, it works well, it is open to all, learn to use it properly.

In the early 1980s an analysis of history textbooks revealed a similar pattern, concluding that "they transmit a very clear and consistent moral message, emphasizing the values of perseverance and determination, hard work, moderation and restraint, and cheerfulness." (Osborne, 1981:73) None of this, of course, is especially surprising. Much has been written in recent years on schools as vehicles for the transmission and maintenance of dominant ideologies and as instruments of cultural and social reproduction and it is hardly surprising to find that curricula and textbooks are not especially radical. Indeed, what is surprising is the extent to which some textbooks and other classroom materials do promote open inquiry and the critical analysis of issues. At the high school level, there is a wide range of books and materials and, in general, they tend to be much less consensual than the material written for the elementary grades and they paint a more realistic picture of politics as it really is, rather than it is supposed to be. They present a view of politics as concerned with conflict and its management and use a wide range of interesting historical and contemporary material.

Teachers have considered freedom of action in their classrooms, and some of them are using it to give their students a genuinely open

political education. Unfortunately, the evidence does not exist to indicate with any degree of certainty how typical they are. It seems reasonable to assume that they are certainly in the minority, and there is a certain amount of evidence to indicate that the majority of classrooms are fairly conservative places, both pedagogically and politically.

British and American researchers, for example, have found that what can be loosely described as traditional pedagogy prevails in most classrooms, where the teacher dominates the instructional process, the students are largely confined to routine assignments and worksheets, and learning remains largely at the level of following instructions and memorizing. Cuban speaks of "persistent instruction," which he describes as "a durable core of teacher practices," consisting largely of "lecturing, large-group instruction, reliance on a textbook and chalkboard, seatwork assignments, recitation, discussion and the use of teacher-made quizzes and tests." (Cuban, 1986:8). There is some evidence that many schools in western Canada fit this description. A 1977 survey of Social Studies teachers in British Columbia schools found that only a small minority wished to be able to choose their own textbooks, preferring that such decisions be made at a higher level. This study also found that "class discussion" and "audio-visual presentations" were the most frequently reported methods of teaching, both of which, the Report notes, are "frequently characterized by a high degree of student passivity." (Aoki *et al.*, 1977)

Manitoba assessed its social studies program in 1984 and students reported that most of their time was spent sitting at their desks, listening or taking notes – although, interestingly enough, teachers reported that much of their time was spent in discussion. The terms are slippery, but it seems that what teachers see as discussion, with all its overtones of participation and activity, students see as lectures or worse. (Manitoba, 1984) In 1975 Alberta reviewed its social studies program which at that time put heavy emphasis on the analysis of controversial value issues and recommended three "instructional modes": the designative (what is); the appraisive (what should be); and the prescriptive (what should be done). The review found that only the designative/descriptive was thoroughly taught, with an 80 per cent emphasis. There was a 20 per cent emphasis on the appraisive and "no orientation whatsoever" to the prescriptive. (Downey, 1975) Indeed, 40 per cent of the teachers rejected the whole open-inquiry, no textbook approach – a finding borne out also in Quebec where Trottier found that a majority of history/social studies teachers chose not to deal with controversial issues in their classrooms. (Trottier, 1982) Classrooms, it seems, are by and large safe, conservative places. They steer clear of

controversial topics and they maintain traditional forms of pedagogy. What makes all this especially important is the research that bears upon the common sense notion that children learn important lessons from how they are taught as well as what they are taught and that the "hidden-curriculum" or the "curriculum-as-experienced" (as opposed to the intended curriculum) is a powerful form of political education.

Thus, in the western provinces one has the contradictory situation of school curricula promoting political inquiry, critical analysis, autonomy and participation, but schools-in-action promoting the learning of factual information, obeying instructions and not rocking the boat. It should be emphasized that this is not true of all classrooms: in every province one finds teachers who involve their students in real-life political issues, who get them to participate in political campaigns and to work on political problems, and whose classrooms are models of critical education and open political discourse. They must never be overlooked, but they are a minority. For the most part, classrooms are models of conformity and rule-following.

The conclusion must be that if one wishes to achieve a genuinely political education, then the production of appropriate curricula and teaching materials, though important, will take one only so far. It is also important to change the shape and organization of schooling, so that schools themselves embody and practice the values of democracy and participation that the curricula espouse. As things stand, what students learn from their books is contradicted by the classrooms in which they spend part of their lives. There is increasing evidence that students are not motivated, that they feel powerless, that there is nothing useful for them to do. Until schools change, this state of affairs will remain. It is notable, for example, that school curricula, for all their interest in introducing students to the real world of politics, do not go so far as to involve them in actual political issues that exist either inside or outside the school. Some teachers do this, and some books advocate it, but one does not find it in curricula. So far as politics are concerned, students are learning *that*, but now learning *how*. If we want political education to contribute to creating and sustaining a more genuinely participatory democracy at all levels of society and institutions, then it is not so much curricula that have to change, as the very shape and meaning of schools. Until then, political education is unlikely to go much beyond preparing students to be passive spectators rather than active participants.

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Commentary:

Political Science Education in the Universities

Paul Fox

A recent survey of political science curriculums in Canadian universities (Hachey and Qualman, 1985) has shown that, whatever it is that most political science professors are doing, it is obviously not teaching high school civics courses about the governmental institutions of Canada or any other country. Such courses are not the only route to political education, of course. Universities offer many learning opportunities both within political science departments and outside of them. But the critical factor in regard to courses in political science is the professor's outlook and attitude. Does he see himself engaged in a process of educating citizens?

My impression, for what it is worth, is that most of my colleagues have very little interest in the kind of political education which we are considering, that is, the creation of informed citizens. They would spurn the role of being high school civic teachers. They would consider it beneath them to instruct the natives in how the machinery of government works. That is trade school stuff. The professors are, after all, research scientists, concerned more with intellectual matters such as amassing and testing data, creating parameters and paradigms, pursuing pure knowledge, publishing papers, and getting the next grant. They are no more interested in the political education of the general public than most medical researchers are in increasing the number of public washrooms. Each group would no doubt find the respective goal laudable but not its prime concern.

I think that many of the students enrolled in political science are more interested in political education than their professors. While the latter tend to be professional researchers who just happen to be working in the field of political science, undergraduates often take a political science course because they are genuinely interested in learning more about the political process. Some of them may even want to be politicians. Others simply want to know more about what they are doing when they go to the ballot box. In either case they see a connection between political science courses and political education which is frequently lost on their professors.

This student interest in politics is encouraging, as is the growth in the number of students enrolling in political science courses. One of the most striking developments in the past 25 years is the increased interest of female undergraduates in political science. In my days as an undergraduate, almost no women studied political science. Today it would not be unusual to have a class in political science composed of half female students. Another change is that both male and female students have begun to think about making a career out of politics immediately. Thirty years ago they hung back, choosing another initial career and hoping to make a pile of money before plunging into elective politics. Now some of them at least are prepared to dive in almost as soon as they graduate.

Finally, we have produced one of the largest bodies of professional political scientists in the world. The number of members of the Canadian Political Science Association is second only to the number of members of its American counterpart. With nearly a thousand card-carrying political scientists loose in the land, we should be able to do more for the cause of political education.

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Commentaire:

Un cas d'éducation politique des femmes à l'université

Micheline de Sève

À vrai dire, il y a un problème parce que, effectivement, de la même façon qu'au niveau secondaire et collégial on est très peu sensible, dans les cours d'éducation politique ou civique, à la décomposition de la population en hommes et femmes. La même tendance se retrouve à l'université, ce qui fait que même si les femmes ont souvent de meilleurs résultats que les hommes – et cela j'ai pu le constater par l'étude des dossiers, en tout cas en ce qui concerne notre programme – elles sont moins nombreuses chez les finissants et elles sont moins nombreuses à poursuivre leurs études au niveau de la maîtrise et du doctorat.

Par exemple, il y a environ 35 p. 100 de femmes dans les inscriptions au début du programme mais, à la fin du programme, c'est à peine 20 p. 100 des finissants qui sont des finissantes. Par contre, si on étudie les moyennes cumulatives, on s'aperçoit que les femmes obtiennent, en général, de meilleurs résultats que les hommes. Donc, il y a manifestement une difficulté pour les femmes à poursuivre des études de sciences politiques sans doute parce que les objectifs de formation politique traditionnels ne rencontrent pas leurs aspirations et ne répondent pas à leur expérience politique.

Plusieurs problèmes sont reliés à ce phénomène. On a fait une relance auprès des finissants, deux ans après la fin de leurs études, et on s'est aperçu que, par exemple, 100 p. 100 des femmes gagnaient moins de 9,000$ alors que plus de 80 p. 100 des hommes gagnaient plus de 9,000$. Donc, il y a des écarts qui sont dus, manifestement, à

des causes qui dépassent le cadre des programmes de sciences politiques. Il existe également une difficulté très grande, ne serait-ce que parce que la visibilité des femmes continue à être totalement ignorée par la discipline, ou à peu près. Effectivement, il y a un cours sur "Femmes et politique" dans la concentration analyse politique en ce qui nous concerne, mais les sujets qui pourraient intégrer de participation l'expérience des femmes de la vie politique et leur volonté de participation à la vie politique sont ventilés soit dans quelques cours, un cours par-ci par-là, généralement à la quinzième semaine de cours, ou alors ignorés complètement. Or, je doute que ce soit une expérience particulière.

Chapter 10:

The Mass Media and Political Education

Frederick J. Fletcher

At each stage in the evolution of the mass media, visionaries have been struck by the educational possibilities of the latest innovation. Each new medium, from books to television, has been seen as a means by which citizen education could be improved. Visions of moral uplift and better informed political participation persist to this day and form the backdrop for much media criticism, most of which stems from disappointment that the media have become primarily instruments of entertainment rather than enlightenment. Despite the increasing dominance of commercial, entertainment-oriented media in Canada and elsewhere, public education remains a powerful motive for media workers, even in the commercial sector. It remains an important part of the rationale for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the educational broadcasters. In addition, it seems clear that all media content, from advertising and situation comedies to news and documentaries, communicates information and values.

If one begins from the normative perspective that the goal of political education is to increase effective political participation, the question of access to information is critical. "Active and productive citizen involvement is impossible if the public does not have the necessary facts and interpretation," as a Canadian political scientist puts it. (Qualter, 1985: 234) Given that it is impossible to compel democratic participation, public education becomes all the more crucial. The question then becomes: What role can the mass media play in political education today? What educational contribution can one expect of media designed for a mass audience? If one accepts the argument of some apologists that the media have little impact on

public knowledge and attitudes, there is little justification for concern about their educational role. Therefore, we must turn our attention first to evidence of media influence.

Research on media effects has gone through an interesting cycle. Early analysts attributed great power to the media, assuming a direct link between content and audience response. However, empirical researchers found an "obstinate audience" that refused to be influenced in simple ways, giving rise to a "limited effects" model of media influence. More recently, work in the area has demonstrated that media content can have considerable influence on public information and attitudes under the right circumstances. Although definitive empirical evidence is lacking, especially for Canada, there is strong circumstantial evidence that the media are a major force in the dissemination of political knowledge, communicating both information and values. It is plausible to suggest that much of what Canadians know and feel about the political system and politicians must come to them through the mass media, since they have few alternative sources of information. When issues of national importance arise, much of the substance of discussions in our homes, workplaces and pubs must inevitably be derived at least indirectly from the media. (Graber, 1984)

An extensive survey of the literature recently concluded by observing that while "absolute statements about the power of the media are mostly invalid, contributory influence and reinforcement are fairly easily demonstrated." (Qualter, 1985: 105) We know, for example, that the media are "powerful determinants" of the public importance attached to issues and that public understanding of social conditions like unemployment and poverty is strongly influenced by the nature of media coverage. (Iyengar, 1987) The way in which the media "frame" issues appears to have a major influence on the nature of public response. There is considerable American research that documents public dependency on the mass media as the primary source of information about significant issues of public policy, such as acid rain and nuclear power. (Chaffee and Schleuder, 1986)

The importance of coverage of politically significant events for public knowledge and attitudes is underlined by a recent study of the impact of media coverage of the Ernst Zundel trial. The media were found to be the chief sources of public information about the trial, and the coverage had an important influence on attitudes. At the most general level, the authors found that "heavy media exposure enabled high school graduates to acquire the same understanding of the issue as university graduates with low or medium exposure .... media exposure increased understanding of the Holocaust among those Canadians who were not hostile at the outset while failing to reduce the size of the prejudiced minority." (Weimann and Winn, 1986: 107)

Perhaps most important, the study found that exposure to media coverage of the trial increased sympathy for Jews, rather than triggering the prejudiced responses feared by many Jewish groups.

An even more significant aspect of the Zundel reporting was the fact that different patterns of coverage appear to have led to different patterns of attitude change.

> The major impact of media exposure in English Canada was to augment sympathy for Jews while this was a secondary impact in French Canada. The main impact of exposure on Francophones was to reinforce longstanding feelings. The different impacts in English and French Canada were attributed in part to different treatments by the media of Jewish issues. The English media not only provided greater trial coverage, but also greater Holocaust coverage and the only coverage of non-violent Jewish events. French Canadians had very little opportunity to learn from the media about ordinary Jewish life outside a context of victimization. (Weimann and Winn, 1986: 108)

The findings from this natural experiment are of considerable theoretical and practical significance, because they provide empirical evidence for the proposition that the nature of the coverage helps to determine the educational impact of political events. As the authors conclude: "The fact that increased exposure to TV news was associated with increased sympathy for Jews suggests that television broadcasters behaved in a responsible way and also exercised some degree of power or influence over the formation of public opinion." (Weimann and Winn, 1986: 108) In this case, major English-language news organizations, concerned about the potential impact of trial coverage, took upon themselves an educational role and, the data suggest, performed it successfully.

Although such findings are by no means definitive, and the need for further research on media effects is clear, it is reasonable to argue that for the purpose of public policy the media have an important role to play in political education. The evidence also suggests that the nature of political journalism is important and that the presentation of dramatic material on television—whether in documentary or fictional form—can have an effect on attitudes.

Viewed from a political education perspective, the domination of Canadian television by American programs is a serious problem. Although Canadians continue to prefer domestic news and information programming, the incidental learning of values and information as a result of these viewing patterns is almost certainly considerable. This is an area that requires careful study. In the meantime,

however, it seems clear that the struggle to maintain a space for Canadian programming that can reach mass audiences must continue. Without the kind of learning that can only come from fictional presentations that touch the imagination, Canadians are likely increasingly to lose touch with fundamental political values and issues of their own society, regardless of their consumption of informational programming. The key problem is not so much socialization to American values – though that is a problem – as the crowding out of Canadian images. Too much of the burden of political education falls on news and public affairs programming and the print media, and not enough on the entertainment side.

On the basis of content studies in Canada and elsewhere, we know that certain lessons regarding the political system are inherent in the media. In this short commentary, only a few examples can be given: (1) that social conditions are caused by individual failings rather than systemic problems; (2) that the range of legitimate political ideologies is narrow; (3) that politicians and civil servants are lacking in integrity and dedication; (4) that political institutions are ineffective; (5) that personalities dominate the political process; (6) that the average citizen has little capacity to influence the system. These well-documented tendencies in media treatment of politics might well have some part in the decline in public confidence in politicians and political institutions noted in recent polls. The linkage, however, is difficult to demonstrate.

In general, it is fair to say, the media take little responsibility for citizen education. Much of the political information that they communicate is passed on incidentally as they seek to entertain their audiences. Work on social learning theory suggests that politically important values, such as those involving the proper social role for women or the underpinnings of the consumer society, are communicated by advertising and entertainment-oriented content. (Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1986) On the more overtly political level, the Canadian media do pay considerable attention to politics and politicians and there is evidence that Canadians do learn from this coverage, even though the average citizen has a limited grasp of the details of the political system or of the major issues of the day.

What can we reasonably expect from the media aimed at a mass public? Generalizing about western democracies, Qualter makes the point that:

> It is not the business of the press to educate the nation nor to tell people what they might rather not know. They accept no responsibility for promoting democratic idealism nor for supporting democratic institutions, especially if these might interfere with their own priorities. (Qualter, 1986: 167)

Studies of election coverage in Canada support the proposition that the media rarely challenge the policy agendas set by the parties, though they do moderate dissent and quite consciously limit criticism. (Soderlund, et al., 1984: 142-3) It appears that one can expect a general pattern of regime support, tempered by attention to personal scandals and the inconsistencies of leaders, but little attempt to broaden the policy debate.

The process of political learning is a transactional one, in which citizens are active participants, condensing the information offered, selecting items of interest, and "integrat[ing] them into their own thinking." (Graber, 1984: 209) People tend to absorb and use information on the basis of a benefit-cost calculus. They are most likely to learn when the perceived benefits of the information (learning something to their possible advantage) exceed the anticipated costs of the process (in terms of time and effort). Although memory of specific events appears to decay rapidly, "the attitudes distilled from these events are likely to be retained." (Graber, 1984: 210) The attitudes become part of the framework used by an individual to assess a particular aspect of reality. Audiences appear to learn most when the information is presented in categories that fit the frameworks they have already learned.

In attempting to broaden the base of political education, the problem of reaching citizens who for one reason or another operate on the margins of the system is a serious one. "The main problem with using the media to enhance political information is that those who most need such educative activity are the least inclined to accept it." (Qualter, 1986: 243) The difficulty lies not so much with the volume of information available as its packaging and delivery. Because much political information is likely to be salient for only a part of its audience at any given time, detailed treatment of issues by the media is generally not undertaken. For specific policy questions, other means must be considered to deliver information that is detailed enough to serve as a basis for political action. The media can provide general political education and create awareness of more complex issues but they are no substitute for more specific information networks. It seems clear that improving the quality of democratic participation in Canada will require special efforts to reach beyond the heavy media users to others who may need their information packaged in different ways.

The parliamentary television channel and its provincial counterparts are one means of providing detailed policy information and arguments to various attentive publics. Even though the coverage of debates and committee proceedings are routinely viewed by only a small proportion of the population, the opportunity exists for citizens to listen in on debates that have high salience for them. In

Ontario, of the 73 per cent of a province-wide sample in 1987 who were aware of the legislature channel, nearly two-thirds reported watching it at some point, though fewer than 10 per cent watched with any regularity. (Environics Research Group, 1987) The provision of such opportunities for political education provides a basis for political education.

While information is by no means a sufficient condition for effective political participation, much can be accomplished simply by ensuring that adequate political information is available to the attentive public. *The Journal* (CBC) has become an important forum for public debate, attracting a high proportion of the politically attentive anglophone public. The creation of provincial equivalents would be a major step forward. In addition, the educational broadcasters have a potentially significant role to play in two areas: (1) presenting straight educational materials on the theory and practice of our political system, and (2) broadening the range of ideologies and voices permitted to speak on a wide range of issues. The CRTC, through regulation of private broadcasters, can play a limited role in ensuring the continued existence of news and public affairs programming, at least a minimum of which speaks to Canadian issues. At the provincial level, government support for community radio might well broaden the range of information available. As for the print media, not much can be done to shift the emphasis to more substantive political coverage, though continued exhortation and scrutiny might be helpful. Research on the media and their effects is most important here. (Fletcher, 1981; Comber and Mayne, 1986)

The quality of political coverage may well continue to improve, as it has over the past few decades, as the policy process itself improves. The increased use by government of consultation processes, green papers, and the like, along with improved committee work in Parliament will provide the attentive public with important opportunities for political education. The popular media cannot themselves generate major policy proposals or expert assessment of government plans but they can make the public aware of them when they emerge from research institutes. The serious media *do* try to perform an educational function, but they must have material to work with. Elite and mass political education thus meet in the popular media and, despite many shortcomings, there is room for optimism. There are no valid reasons for abandoning the democratic vision of a media system that contributes to political education. If improved political education through the mass media is not a sufficient condition for improved citizen participation, it is certainly a necessary one.

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Chapter 11:

Network Research, Television Programs and Political Education

David Walker

Popular programs broadcast by national networks carry elements important to political gossip. Not a day passes without husbands and wives commenting to each other about something seen on *The National* or *Canada AM*; the experience is just as common in coffee klatches and bars across the nation. Whether these airborne ingredients form popular political education is another matter. Indeed, the agenda-setting effects of all media may be far from striking.

In 1985, the Department of External Affairs commissioned two studies, one a content analysis of print and broadcast news to determine what international stories got most coverage, and another to assess Canadian attitudes to foreign policy matters and international affairs. The analysis of the output of print and broadcasting recorded a bias in favour of trade and economic issues which comprised about a quarter of the media's international coverage between the election of September of 1984 and June of 1985. Though the Ethiopian famine raged at this time, it received only 4 percent of total coverage of events abroad. However, the attitude survey revealed the major international priorities of interest to Canadians to be poverty and hunger, followed by concerns of war and peace – the latter issues being raised in only 14 percent of media content (O'Malley, 1987). At least in respect to international topics, in two broad studies, the influence of media topics on attitudes actually held seems flimsy.

It is, perhaps, easy to overstate. Other influences seem to be much less visible than the blue flickers of television seen nightly in any town. However, correlation is not cause, and "political education" is more than specific indoctrinations of "political training". Education is a complex effect, taking place over a long time, induced by many stimuli and embedded in both nature and nurture. I have reviewed numerous studies from this country and elsewhere on the purported effects of television. With two exceptions, they contained much *belief* about the effects of television – in general – on public opinion – in general. Most often they failed to relate specific programs to specific program effects on either individuals or groups.

One exception was perhaps stimulated by conclusions of a study by J.M. Wober of the Independent Broadcasting Authority in Britain. He observed people watching six months of television coverage of the House of Lords in particular news and public affairs broadcasts. His study recorded no change over the six months in the interest of viewers. Claimed knowledge of the Lords remained constant. He took the trouble to also test knowledge and found confirmation that was so. Moreover, questions about interest in also seeing coverage of the House of Commons revealed that desire for information from that chamber actually fell. The author concluded, "the result. . .has been to discourage any interpretation that viewing informational programming has had any effect either of improving knowledge of attitudes toward the House of Lords" (Wober, 1985:23).

Perhaps in reaction, the Peers conducted their own study. The results have been tabulated, but not released. Inquiries suggest they may be more successful in finding specific connections between these particular television programs and political education. Information suggests the existence of programming effects "behind the scenes" in shaping attitudes, not of the general public for whom they were intended, but rather of parliamentarians, press and pressure groups – people capable of eloquence on the connections between power and the power of broadcasting.

In my own investigations I concentrated on what Canadian English-language television networks reported they knew and what they did. For example, I asked five networks to select programs broadcast between July 1, 1985 and June 30, 1986, which were produced to objectives consistent with informing the political education of viewers. Examination of these nominations results in a terse conclusion. In prime time (from 8pm to 11pm) the CBC English network, which only engages about a third of the population, provides more programming consistent with political education than other networks. CTV does little during these hours, and though the regional educational networks have some programming, it reaches only a small fraction of sets in use.

I have reviewed sixty research studies on children's, news and public affairs programming made available by Canadian networks in an unsuccessful search for convincing evidence that specific program content provoked explicit shifts in values, attitudes or opinions of audiences. Broadcasters have indeed discovered a lot of social information – much of it deserving more analysis for evidence of who we were and the ways we followed. Much of it is based on responses to unstandardized questions at particular points in time and, unfortunately, can never be put to longitudinal analysis. For example, once in 1959, CBC looked into how people in Halifax spent leisure time, and never again (CBC, 1959). And, while the CBC did keep track of important Anglophone attitudes in Quebec during the 1970's, the studies used constantly varying groups over the decade, and were not matched with similarly-designed studies of Québécois opinion (CBC, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977).

The CBC now appears to be abandoning this sort of social research because of its substantial cost and changes in programming-institution of *The Journal*, for example, or cancellation of *For the Record*, an expensive, research-based, dramatic program on public issues. All this reviewed network research presents no evidence with which to cite specific effects of English children's, news or public affairs network television on the range of attitudes and values bundled into whatever would describe the political education of an average Anglophone.

One difficulty must be that we are well-fed on information. There are simply too many sources other than television from which one might draw. The Royal Commission on Newspapers found that Canadians used more than 100 separate sources of information weekly (1981:33). Though the average person consumes the equivalent of 40 days each year watching television, there are more than 320 left for other pursuits (Environics, 1985). Not sure what happens as a result of watching television, we are even less sure about television's place in the vast domains of individual information processing in work, leisure and, perhaps, sleep (people have been known to doze before their screens). However, there is much desire that ignorance, and lack of scientific proof, could be overcome. If freer of convictions about television influence on the masses, more political scientists might examine interrelationships between politicians and media. Interpretation could have more substance.

Social scientists and politicians have expressed concerns that as television use increased, so would its political effects (for example, Williams, 1986, McQuail in Graber, 1984; Smythe, 1981; Gerbner, 1976). Other teachers (such as those I interviewed at the School for Experimental Education in Toronto) have now taken the same tack. They worry about the inability of Canadian teenagers to identify

national issues, while being apparently informed on American power images imported by the cult attention to Sylvester Stallone's motion pictures. Television and rock video are believed responsible for this American content in teenage thinking, with less influence attributed to the stages in teen intellectual development, usually observed to give priority to examining pop stars before adopting any interest in ideas. A Canadian reaction to these high school Americanisms has been an effort to impart "media literacy" through the curriculum.

There is disappointment here. The concern to interpret media shares some of the sort of anxiety first parents feel when trying to teach their children to read in the earliest years of life: the slow progress of human development thwarts great expectations for the intellect. However, among growing children, depending on the dynamics of power in their particular homes, political issues are often simultaneously important to master by emotional warfare, and intellectually uninteresting. The ideas that attract adults, in children do not usually compete well with social activities, until the self is discovered by testing many childhood relationships.

Distinguished social scientists – some of whom have personal experience with Canadian broadcasting – have forecast effects as extreme as the complete annihilation of a distinct Canadian culture. In a lower key, some scholars describe a felt consensus that broadcasting has "a significant bearing on national unity" (Jackson *et al.*, 1986:161) and it is likely that regulatory policies demonstrating to the public that the state controls the institutions of broadcasting owe their existence to belief that public control of the system is important to national unity. There is evidence that in countries where market forces are the major social controls for television people worry more about its presumed deleterious effects than in those places – to date including Canada – where more complex social controls are in public hands (Wober, in Denig, 1985:230).

At present, it is Canadian public policy to require the CBC to make the main programming contribution to national unity. CBC programmers consequently put out numerous messages calculated to deal in some way with this aspect of its mandate. Lacking evidence of direct effect (probably fortunately) we also lack evidence for CBC's performance. Both the 1985 Task Force on Broadcasting Policy and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Culture and Communications have concluded that this policy could bring the CBC into controversy, perhaps when airing issues "related to separatist opinion, whether in Quebec, western Canada or any other part of Canada". In a new Act the Committee would strip the CBC of this requirement: "There must be no suggestion in the Act that the CBC has any obligation to serve as a propagandist, even for a cause as legitimate as national unity" (House of Commons, 1987:55, 58).

It may be that the evident desire of Canadians to link the performance of broadcasting media to the fate of the country itself reflects our particular political education. An observer in Europe even implies it has driven us a little crazy. The Canadian notion of communication as the motor of cultural sovereignty has, he thinks, now gone haywire. Canada, he finds, is "a society super-sensitized to the link between national unity and a communication system – without any distinction recognized between the distribution of physical and symbolic goods. . ." (Collins, in Ferguson, 1986:154).

In the United States, rich in media research, one finds the second clear case of a particular species of television programming producing a political effect. For some time, Richard Armey, a Texas Republican, enjoyed C-Span, the cable specialty channel offering national coverage from Washington of Congress and its committees. As he spent more and more time with C-Span and its portrayal of Congress, he found he had even stopped watching "Dallas" with his wife. At that point, according to ABC News, he became convinced he had a place in the events he watched so assiduously, and persuaded thousand of Texans to agree. They elected him to the House of Representatives. What does the parliamentary channel, the CBC version of C-Span, do for Canadians? Asked for their impressions, three in ten Canadians say that their interest in government has increased since television was first allowed into parliament. However, six in ten insist that television has had no effect, and 12% say that the broadcast of proceedings has actually decreased their interest (Adams, in Fleming, 1986:25).

Life in the regions is even dimmer than Ottawa on the tube. We are not astonished to learn only 4% of Alberta viewers tuned into the quintessential Montreal doings of Empire, Inc. Neither do we ponder when we learn the biggest audience for the conference on aboriginal rights in 1984 was made up of 49,000 children under eleven years of age (CBC, 1983; 1984). As Canada waits to see what the government will make of our television in a new broadcasting act, no link between programming and the citizen's political education has been demonstrated. It seems we move forward in ignorance, with no justifications either for total deregulation of broadcasting nor totalitarian temptation.

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Commentaire:

Education politique et télévision

Florian M. Sauvageau

En 1978, mon ami Jacques Godbout et moi avons fait un film documentaire à l'ONF sur l'information télévisée, qui s'appelle *Derrière l'image*, dans lequel nous essayions d'expliquer que le téléjournal devient le lieu où s'exprime la nouvelle démocratie, la démocratie du spectacle, celle où l'émotion a remplacé l'explication, où l'action a remplacé la réflexion, où les personnalités ont remplacé les idées. Le journalisme "people-oriented" a remplacé le journalisme "issue-oriented." Quand on parle des enjeux, des "issues", c'est toujours au plan de la confrontation. S'il y a une confrontation, on peut avoir accès au petit écran. Le débat constitutionnel ne fait plus la manchette. Le jour où Gil Rémillard et Lowell Murray s'empoigneront au coin d'une rue, ils feront la manchette parce qu'il y aura confrontation.

Ce qui est plus grave, quant à moi, c'est que la télévision est maintenant le leader dans le monde de l'information. Il y a 10 ans, les journaux dominaient; on faisait les téléjournaux à partir des journaux dans les salles de rédaction. Maintenant, on fait les journaux à partir de la télévision. Le Journal de Montréal et celui de Québec ainsi que les tabloids en sont l'exemple; USA Today, aux États-Unis, en est l'exemple. Les journaux sont devenus des sous-produits de la télévision.

Ce qui est plus grave encore, à mon avis, c'est que les participants aux débats politiques se sont adaptés aux contraintes de la télévision. Les hommes politiques et les autres acteurs politiques,

dans le sens large, définissent leurs messages en fonction de la télévision. Vous ne pouvez plus faire de politique si vous n'avez pas une personnalité qui passe à la télévision. Et, pour faire passer le message, quand on n'a pas les moyens de se payer un appareil de communication très sophistiqué, on fait appel à la manifestation. On manifeste pour les caméras; s'il n'y a pas de caméras, on ne manifeste pas.

Les technologies nouvelles viennent encore exacerber ce phénomène. Le spectacle est encore plus présent à cause de l'évolution technologique. Au plan de la production télévisée, l'utilisation de l'ordinateur pour le graphisme, l'utilisation de la vidéo, les effets spéciaux rendent l'information télévisée encore plus spectaculaire. Le spectateur fait maintenant du "zapping." Quand il n'est pas content, quand la présentation n'est pas assez dynamique, il change de station.

Quand je faisais du documentaire, il y a quelques années, il y avait un "teaser." Si vous aviez deux ou trois minutes qui titillaient au début, les gens restaient. Maintenant, il faut titiller tout le temps, parce que si ça ne titille plus, on va zapper et on ira à un autre canal où ça titille! On vidéoclippe les nouvelles; on utilise, en information, spécialement dans les supper-hour shows, les mêmes techniques que celles de la publicité et des vidéoclips. On a commencé à les utiliser dans les émissions dramatiques. *Miami Vice*, c'est un vidéoclip; *Lance et compte, He Shoots and He Scores*, qui a eu tant de succès au Québec et moins au Canada anglais, c'est un long vidéoclip d'une heure. Et les nouvelles, maintenant, de plus en plus, sont faites selon le mode du vidéoclip.

Santé, météo et consommation, ce sont les "soft news" choisies par les sondages qui remplacent les nouvelles, qui sont les "hard news." Aux États-Unis, on trouve maintenant que l'intérêt pour l'information télévisée décroît, en particulier l'intérêt pour les grands sujets. Il y a un désintéressement des baby-boomers pour l'information. Il n'y a que dans la catégorie des 55 ans et plus qu'il y a encore un immense intérêt pour l'information. Ce qui fait que les "soft news" remplacent les nouvelles, qu'il y a beaucoup d'information régionale, des meurtres locaux, du sport, etc.

Il y a une étude de Radio-Québec qui vient d'être publiée sur l'évolution de la télévision francophone depuis 1985 et qui indique, pour la télévision québécoise francophone, les mêmes tendances que celles qu'on constate actuellement aux États-Unis: un mouvement de fond vers le divertissement depuis 1984, l'existence d'une relation étroite entre la performance d'une station et le pourcentage de divertissement à son antenne. On place l'information les vendredis soirs quand personne n'écoute et durant le week-end à 18h00 et 19h00, quand les cotes d'écoute sont basses aussi.

Tout cela peut créer un problème dans le contexte de la télévision commerciale, mais c'est encore plus grave quand la télévision publique se conforme à ce modèle-là. Pour moi, le sondage est devenu un outil dangereux, un outil de manipulation, un outil qui contribue au mépris du spectateur; on ne lui donne que ce qu'il veut. Comment peut-il décider qu'il n'aime pas ce qu'on ne lui a jamais offert? On ne peut pas le sonder sur ce qu'il n'a jamais vu ou sur des façons de faire qui ne lui ont jamais été offertes. Les gens veulent savoir, mais on les méprise en pensant que cela ne les intéresse pas et en ne prenant pas les outils nécessaires pour leur expliquer ce qui se passe.

Je répète que quand la télévision publique fait cela, c'est encore plus grave. Cela devient une télévision publique qui n'a de publique que le nom. Le secteur public est là pour provoquer le choix. On est ici dans un secteur d'offre et de demande. On peut changer l'offre en offrant des choix différents, mais il va falloir aussi changer la demande. On est ici dans un système de marchés, et les médias, au plan de la demande, ont peu à faire. Il y a là un rôle capital pour le monde de l'éducation. Il faut éduquer pour la télé, éduquer à la télé sur le rôle des médias dans notre société, sur les forces et faiblesse des médias dans notre société, parce que c'est devenu un enjeu politique important. Il faut former une génération de spectateurs critiques. Cela fait partie de l'éducation politique et cela doit se faire à l'école.

Commentary:

The Potential of Television

Mark Starowicz

In January of 1982, the CBC broke two major conventions of North American television. It took its major national newscast and put it in prime time, at 10 o'clock instead of the fringe time of 11 p.m., and it added a forty minute daily public affairs program, *The Journal*. This was risky because it scheduled information programming against prime time American entertainment, and every verity in the television business was being challenged. The move was treated by much of the entertainment press as a potential act of suicide.

What transpired, of course, was an instant, major success for the CBC. *The National* and *The Journal* began drawing over a million and a half people a night, 500,000 more viewers than it had previously had in that time slot. Furthermore, research revealed that this additional half million people came to the CBC, not from viewers of the other networks but from previous nonviewers. We actually created half a million more television viewers in this country.

What does this tell us? It certainly shatters one of the conventions about television – that major audiences could only be assembled for mass entertainment. Here was an hour of information drawing audiences comparable to those for American entertainment programs in Canada. It also suggested that hundreds of thousands of people had shut off their sets years ago, uninterested in such American entertainment programming. This suggests that there was, and probably still is, a large dissatisfied Canadian audience that wants *real* television choices.

The popularity of *The National* and *The Journal* points to a Canadian citizenry that is far more interested in the world than common mythology indicates. People watching these two programs know they can expect relatively weighty fare; as a rule our interviews and documentaries are on serious matters of national and international affairs. Recent feature documentaries on Vichy France, the African National Congress and contemporary Syria drew audiences of almost two million people. Furthermore, there is another million people watching the CTV News at 11 p.m., so these can be added to the picture.

I think this says healthy things about our democracy. The television audience in Canada is no sullen lumpenproletariat staring hypnotically at the television set with a can of beer in their hands. The audience is curious, alert, and interested in national and international affairs, social affairs, the arts and the sciences. Television and radio are extraordinarily, disproportionately, important to this country, because electronic dissemination of information is perfectly suited to our disparate geography. Political and social leaders must recognize that television is *the* key instrument of communication in this country.

The problem is the domination of Canadian television by American programming. A Canadian child, by the age of 12, will have watched 12,000 hours of television, 10,000 of which will have been spent watching American shows. That is more time than that child will have spent in a Canadian school. More than 52 per cent of the viewing of Francophone children under the age of 12 is American programming. We in Canada have sold an entire generation to another culture.

If you take all of the signals, cable and broadcast, three-quarters of what is on Canadian television is American. There are more American than Canadian news and public affairs programs on Canadian television. But the most serious problem exists in drama, including everything from comedy to serious theatre. Almost half of our time spent watching television is occupied with that – television after all is essentially an entertainment medium. The amount of Canadian drama or fiction on the air is minimal. Over 95 per cent of all the drama, popular or otherwise, all the sitcoms, consumed by Canadians, is American.

We have just gone through a period where we have Canadianized our Constitution. We have also seen much extreme nationalism about the state of our arts, but it never occurred to anybody to Canadianize the very instrument that holds the most potential for national development, for national unity, and for national consciousness. In the last 15 years, the CRTC has allowed the devastating erosion of the Canadian television system. The situation is probably unrecoverable

unless we take the most extraordinary actions immediately. Our society has lost its capacity to transmit its values to the next generation.

Commentary:

The Current Situation in Newspapers

Jeffrey Simpson

Going back to the 19th century, to the very beginning, newspapers have always been rooted in the regions, in the local areas of Canada. There were many perfectly good reasons why this was so, one of which was that it was not possible to physically transport them anywhere outside a given region. That was always where the advertising and the circulation were. When the railways came along, it became possible to transport the old *Globe* from Toronto to London, Ontario, and some of the Montreal papers from Montreal up to Quebec City or to Trois-Rivières, but they have basically been localized.

There were some papers which in this century prided themselves – perhaps a bit falsely and arrogantly – in having a kind of national vocation and moving beyond their own locale. A lot of these papers have retrenched. I am thinking of papers like the *Winnipeg Free Press* in Defoe's great day, or *The Montreal Gazette* 20 or 30 years ago, or *The Vancouver Sun* up until about five years ago. These were papers clearly rooted in their own province or their own city, but which nevertheless said they wanted to explain to their readers what was happening in other parts of Canada and other parts of the world, and decided to allocate a certain amount of resources to doing that.

In each of the cases I have mentioned, the papers have retreated into being almost exclusively local papers, because the region is still where the advertising and the circulation are. I find as I move across the country that all federal or national public affairs are almost continuously reported as a series of bilateral matters in the

newspapers. In other words, there is a terrible problem in Canadian print journalism in terms of explaining or asking readers to see things in the round. If you go to British Columbia, it is always Vancouver versus Ottawa; in Quebec, it is Quebec versus Ottawa. And this obviously is the enemy of political education, because all people who are involved in the body politic at the national level understand that there is a whole range of pressures that operates on the national government and that must be taken into account in order for a decision to be fairly reached. And yet invariably the newspapers lay excessive emphasis on only one of the dynamics at work.

Newspapers have been subjected in this country, as in others, to two enormous whiplashes of technology or market forces. The first has been the influence of television. Television has fragmented the newspaper market and put them under great difficulty; consequently, the economic factors behind newspapers have led to a rationalization. In a number of important markets in Canada, where there used to be two middle-brow, mass circulation papers (generally one Conservative, one Liberal), there has been a shrinkage; papers died and we had one-newspaper towns. Interestingly enough Toronto and Montreal, as opposed to many American cities of similar size, are still vibrant, three-and-four-newspaper cities. But in other places papers died with a number of consequences.

One of these was the first stage in a kind of stratification of the market, and you now have in newspapers what you get in television, a kind of narrow-casting. In many markets, with a middle-brow paper, you now have a tabloid newspaper that has come in at the so-called bottom of the market with a mass appeal. For instance, Winnipeg used to have the *Tribune* and the *Free Press* – now Winnipeg has the *Free Press* and *The Sun* beneath it. Then, because of technology and satellites, you now have *The Globe and Mail* that goes across the top. *The Sun* appeals to a certain audience and *The Globe and Mail* appeals to a certain audience.

The stratification of newspapers has interesting implications in terms of political education. The tabloids really are not interested to a substantial extent in political education. They have targeted and analysed their market in a way that suggests that they should provide a kind of *U.S.A. Today* approach, but in tabloid form. So they are not really interested in providing a great deal of political information. Conversely, *The Globe and Mail* at the top is reaching about 330,000 people across the country. Therefore, from a newspaper point of view, for the first time, we have the possibility of a national agenda being set for a certain group of the population from St. John's to Victoria.

Commentary:

Improving the Media

Tom Kent

The most direct way to improve political education is to improve the media. There may be more fundamental reforms, in the educational system or in the political process, that would do more good in the long run. But for almost all of us, the media are the main source of the information that is politically significant. Better reporting and commentary would be the quickest way to raise the general level of political education. And what that chiefly requires is quite simple: it is more journalists, and more knowledgeable journalists.

To say that is not to attack the political journalists we have. Considering how much they are expected to cover, and taking account of the conditions of work that their employers provide, I think that the general performance is as good as one can expect. There is, certainly, a lot of very superficial reporting and comment; but some is very good. The main problem with our political journalists is that there are too few of them, with too little time to write stories adequate for a politically active democracy.

There are too few because the owners of the media do not, as a whole, spend enough on the contents of their newspapers and the programs of their television and radio stations. By "enough" I do not mean more than they can afford. In our society we cannot have a free press, independent of pressure, unless it generally earns profits comparable to those of other businesses.

That condition, however, imposes no problem in Canada today. With few exceptions, media businesses have rates of return on their

capital that far exceed the general standard. This is partly due to the strong elements of monopoly in the business. In the case of the electronic media, it is the consequence of a regulatory system that is the classic example of how government regulation should not operate.

The media naturally use monopoly power to charge their advertisers all that the traffic will bear. Unfortunately, there is an additional way to maximize profits. Much of the space or the time between the ads can be filled with cheap material. The extent to which the media take advantage of this depends chiefly on journalistic conscience. The 1980 Royal Commission found that a significantly higher proportion of revenue is spent on content by newspapers that are run by people whose main business is newspapers; those that are owned by conglomerates, for whom they are merely one of their business interests, spend significantly less. There are a few special cases, of course, but the general rule is clear: media are wonderful cash cows for milking by people whose interest is in large business empires.

All Canadian daily newspapers theoretically recognise, through the statement of principles of their association, that "the operation of a daily newspaper is in effect a public trust, no less binding because it is not formally conferred". To fulfil that trust costs money. That it should be fulfilled, to the extent that the media's resources make possible, is a legitimate concern of public policy. The flow of public information is crucial to a free, democratic society. The flow must be free, and government can therefore have no concern with what the media write and say. It can and should be concerned that the resources generated within the industry are used within it, to fulfil the trust. It is a cautious estimate to say that the media generally could increase their expenditures on information content by at least 50 percent and still earn rates of return on capital that most businesses would envy.

My main proposal is therefore a simple, redistributive tax measure: a healthy tax credit for units of the media that spend on their content more than the industry average, in proportion to revenue, balanced by a surtax of equal amount on those that spend less than the industry average. Such a measure would not by itself generate better media; it is possible to spend a lot of money on trash. But once the principle of using the industry's resources within the industry was established, I think we could rely on the journalists to ensure that more would be spent on journalism, on "presenting the news comprehensively, accurately, and fairly" (to quote again the newspaper publishers' statement of principles).

Performance falls far short of those adverbs because, their executives and some stars apart, the media generally do not pay salaries commensurate with the qualifications required for difficult

and responsible work. They do not employ enough journalists for them to be able to specialise to the extent that mastery of complex issues requires. Too few journalists have the time or the resources to dig fully into stories. Perhaps most importantly of all, they do not have time to make what they know not only accurate but as clear and as interesting to the audience as good education requires. More journalists, and better qualified journalists, will interact with each other to raise standards, open minds, offset prejudices, and improve political education.

Commentaire:

L'éducation politique des journalistes

Lise Bissonnette

Les journalistes ne peuvent pas donner ce qu'ils n'ont pas. L'éducation politique des journalistes est moins qu'élémentaire et, dans bien des cas, elle est inexistante. Je n'ai pas fait beaucoup de recherche dans les études académiques sur cette affaire. Je me fie beaucoup à ce que j'ai vu. Quand j'étais rédactrice en chef du Le Devoir, je pense avoir parcouru 400 ou 500 curriculum vitae de journalistes. Je les étudiais, soit occasionnellement, soit quand j'ouvrais des postes et que je faisais des appels publics à des candidatures. L'exercice a été extrêmement révélateur. J'y ai appris qu'il n'y a pas de modèle spécifique d'éducation des journalistes. De plus en plus, au Canada anglais, on engage des gens qui ont fait des écoles de journalisme; ce qui ne veut pas nécessairement dire qu'ils ont une éducation politique. Mais, la tendance est d'engager des gens qui ont fait l'école de journalisme. Au Québec, il est loin d'en être ainsi, même si ce modèle se dessine un peu.

Il y a environ 200 journalistes à la Galerie de la presse; du moins, à l'époque où j'étais à Ottawa, c'était à peu près le nombre. A Québec, il y en a une cinquantaine. Je n'ai pas tenté l'expérience, je parle d'intuition: mais, si je lançais un questionnaire politique de base dans ces galeries de la presse, parmi les journalistes politiques les plus spécialisés, pour leur demander l'ABC des institutions politiques, si je demandais à la plupart d'entre eux quel est le rôle d'une commission parlementaire? Est-elle là simplement pour écouter des groupes qui viennent dire qu'ils ne sont pas contents du gouvernement? À quoi sert-elle dans le processus politique? Si je leur demandais le

cheminement d'un projet de loi? Si je leur demandais la différence entre l'exécutif et le législatif? Vous seriez assez étonnés par les réponses. Si on demandait à plusieurs de ces journalistes la différence entre un chef de cabinet et un sous-ministre, entre la fonction publique et la fonction de conseiller politique, je suis convaincue que beaucoup d'entre eux auraient de la difficulté à l'exprimer clairement.

À mon avis, plusieurs de ces personnes ne possèdent pas l'essentiel des connaissances sur les institutions. Les noms qui vous viennent à la bouche, quand vous pensez au journalisme politique sont des exceptions qui confirment la règle et qui déforment notre propre perception de la presse politique. On a l'impression que journaliste est synonyme d'expert, de personne qui comprend le système parlementaire et les institutions canadiennes aussi bien que n'importe quel professeur. En général, ce n'est pas le cas.

Généralement, leur préparation, comme celle de la plupart des gens dans toute la société, se fait par pur instinct. Bien sûr, certains journalistes ont étudié les sciences politiques; d'autres ont reçu des cours en journalisme; et d'autres ont fait 56 métiers. Je ne méprise ni les uns ni les autres. Je dis qu'en général ils ne reflètent que le système scolaire général. On ne peut pas juger par eux les départements de sciences politiques ou les cours de journalisme. Ils n'y sont pas allés. Mais on peut juger notre système scolaire. Comment prépare-t-il ces gens à l'univers politique?

La conception de la politique qu'on sert dans nos universités, sinon dans nos écoles secondaires et nos collèges, est d'abord et avant tout une conception stratégique de la politique. Alors, on a chez nous des journalistes qui n'ont que cette conception en tête. Ce ne sont pas des études politiques qu'ils ont faites, ce sont des études stratégiques; comment se débrouillent les gens au pouvoir, quelles tactiques vont-ils prendre pour réussir tel ou tel coup? Ils ne cherchent pas à voir le portrait de façon exhaustive, ils cherchent à voir les mouvements, ce qui s'en vient et ce qui s'en va, ce qu'on calcule. Nos journalistes ont donc fait une éducation à la confrontation.

Nous avons aussi des gens qui ont été formés davantage aux communications qu'au journalisme. Ils sont obsédés par les luttes d'influence et le rapport entre le pouvoir et les médias. Ils voient le pouvoir comme une sorte de manipulateur qui cherche constamment à les encadrer, à entrer dans le spectacle, dans la guerre des images, etc. Il m'est arrivé très souvent de rencontrer des groupes d'étudiants en journalisme et de me faire poser la question en ces termes-là: comment le pouvoir cherche-t-il à vous manipuler, à vous encadrer, à vous influencer? Il est sûr que ces choses existent, mais elles ne représentent pas tout le pouvoir. Ces étudiants en journalisme avaient donc une conception extrêmement antagoniste des rapports,

non pas entre les acteurs politiques, mais entre les médias et le pouvoir.

Ce type d'éducation politique, si je peux l'appeler ainsi, est un produit du système. Mais je ne sais de quel système. Je serais incapable de dire si ce sont nos départements de sciences politiques, nos cours de journalisme ou nos écoles secondaires qui en sont la cause. Mais enfin, le syndrome est là. Il amène aussi chez les journalistes une sorte de mépris ou d'ignorance de la couverture politique que j'appellerais non politicienne. (J'ai toujours l'air négatif. Mais on est un peu ici pour se critiquer, j'imagine!) Il est évidemment moins intéressant de travailler sur des dossiers, d'étudier un projet de loi en soi, d'étudier l'évolution des politiques sociales, économiques, énergétiques et autres. On laisse cela, de plus en plus, aux experts. À mon avis – et je peux me tromper – il y a de moins en moins de journalistes qui se spécialisent dans un domaine particulier, sauf peut-être dans les pages économiques. Mais, encore là, je ne suis pas certaine qu'on parle de politique économique vraiment. Il y a de moins en moins de journalistes qui se spécialisent et de plus en plus de journalistes qui interprètent tout en fonction du "politique" au sens étroit.

Je ne sais comment conclure pour une bonne raison, c'est que je déteste dire "le système scolaire doit être réformé". Je pense que toutes les missions qu'on donne au système scolaire sont un peu inutiles. Il a sa vie en lui-même. Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse le charger de multiples tâches, à moins qu'il soit convaincu lui-même qu'il a son poids et qu'il ne va pas changer du jour au lendemain. Alors c'est toujours facile, peut-être parce qu'on le pense spontanément, de dire: bon, c'est l'école, ce sont nos cours de sciences politiques, ce sont nos cours de journalisme qui devraient changer.

Je pense que ce sont peut-être nos salles de rédaction qui devraient changer. Je me fais une critique à moi-même à ce moment-là, c'est que je pense que ce sont peut-être les éditeurs qui devraient changer dans le choix des journalistes, mais aussi dans la façon de les préparer à assumer certaines fonctions. On a tendance, quand on occupe ces fonctions-là, à changer les gens de place, à les envoyer ici ou là, sans trop s'inquiéter parce que le bassin est relativement limité et il faut aller avec les moyens qu'on a et on a tendance à ne pas donner aux journalistes les moyens, au moment où ils sont dans les journaux, à la télévision, à la radio, de parfaire leur éducation politique.

Pour ma part, la piste concrète que je verrais, c'est que de temps à autre, on libère les gens, si on en a les moyens, pour leur permettre de faire une réflexion sur leur propre métier et sur ce qu'ils couvrent. J'aimerais que cela puisse se faire. Je crois vraiment que ce serait la piste la plus concrète. Je n'ai pas d'autres solutions à offrir. Ce que je

voudrais tout simplement, c'est éviter que ce soit l'univers politique lui-même qui fasse toute l'éducation du journaliste. Je pense que, même si j'éprouve de la sympathie pour les politiciens, ce n'est pas leur rôle et ça se termine toujours, quand le politicien éduque le journaliste, par de la manipulation.

Chapter 12:

The Contribution of Investigatory Commissions to Political Education

Thomas H.B. Symons

I would like to focus on three points. First, does the experience of investigatory commissions answer the questions: Are Canadians concerned about the state of political education in and about their own country? Do they care? Second, what does the experience and findings of investigatory commissions suggest about the state of political education in Canada? Third, do investigatory commissions contribute significantly to political education in Canada? What is their role in the political education process?

My conclusions about these three points can be put succinctly. First, a great many people do indeed care, and care profoundly, about the state of political education in this country, as indicated in the submissions to commissions and in the participation in the public hearings and other events that surround their work. Second, the commission experience suggests that the state of political education in Canada leaves a great deal to be desired. In fact, it is by and large appalling. Despite their uneasy concern, and an intuitive awareness and understanding, the Canadian public lacks even the basic knowledge about the Canadian political system, its institutions and practices, and how these work. Third, investigatory commissions can, do, and should contribute significantly to political education in Canada.

In amplifying my conclusions on these three points I shall draw directly upon my experience with four investigatory commissions, which were very different from one another in subject matter,

sponsorship, and mandate. One, the Federal Cultural Policy Review (the Applebaum-Hébert Committee), 1979-1982, was appointed by the federal government to examine, report upon, and make recommendations concerning the state of federal policies and programs relating to culture. Another, the Ministerial Commission on French Language Secondary Education, 1971-1972, was provincial, appointed by the government of Ontario to review the legislation providing for French language secondary education in Ontario and, more broadly, to examine the general provisions for French language instruction in the province and to make recommendations for the equitable resolution of problems arising from the implementation of the legislation. A third, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, is a statutory body charged with the responsibility of administering the Ontario Human Rights Code and, more broadly, upholding human rights in the province. Its 1977 report, *Life Together: A Report on Human Rights in Ontario*, reviewed the state of human rights in the province and made some one hundred recommendations as well as a detailed proposal for a new Ontario Human Rights Code. The fourth, the Commission on Canadian Studies, 1972-1984, might be termed a non-governmental or private sector commission. It was appointed by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada to examine the state of teaching and research about Canada and to make recommendations designed to foster an appropriate attention to the Canadian content and context of education.

Despite the considerable diversity of their respective mandates, these four commissions found a large measure of common ground in the area of political education. Each found, in fact, that the state of political knowledge was an inescapable factor in their work. For example, in the task of finding out from the public what their concerns and expectations were in each of these fields, much depended on the general level of political education and upon the ability of the public to assess situations and to comment and communicate realistically to the commissions. Similarly, the capacity of each of the four commissions, and of their sponsoring bodies, to obtain understanding and support for the policy objectives and recommendations that seemed desirable in the light of their findings largely depended, particularly in these four complex and sensitive fields, upon whether political education was sufficiently advanced to make the proposed reforms possible. Further, each of the four commissions was, in pursuit of its mandate, directly concerned with many aspects of the education process, including, often and in particular, the processes of political education.

On the first point, whether or not Canadians are concerned about the state of political education in and about their own country, the extensive public response to these four commissions indicated a substantial degree of public interest and concern. Moreover, the

nature of the response in each case made unmistakably clear the importance attached to political education and the widespread concern about its state. A great many briefs were submitted to all of these commissions: more than 1,100 to the Federal Cultural Policy Review; some 200 to the Ministerial Commission on French Language Education in Ontario; about 350 to the review by the Ontario Human Rights Commission; and nearly 2,000 to the Commission on Canadian Studies. These submissions varied in length from a few pages to substantial depositions running to hundreds of pages with appendices. Perhaps surprisingly, there was not excessive repetition in the submissions. Almost every brief put forward at least one new point, or enlarged in some useful way upon points that had been made by someone else. In addition to these numerous briefs, each commission received a heavy volume of correspondence and telephone calls that was in some ways as important an indication of the interests and concerns of the public as the more formal submissions.

Since the publication of *To Know Ourselves*, there have been more than 300 reports on the report – by federal and provincial departments; by universities, faculties, and departments; by centres and institutes; by community colleges, schools, and school boards; by foundations and charitable organizations; by educational associations and learned societies; and by many community organizations; as well as by government departments, commissions of inquiry, universities, and educational organizations in thirty other countries. Although the Commission completed its principal work a decade ago, as its chairman I am still, I rather regret to say, receiving on average about ten letters a day, fifty a week, 2,500 per year, from the public about its findings, recommendations, and subject matter. The nature and extent of this response demonstrates, and documents, the tremendous and continuing concern amongst a great many Canadians about the state of political knowledge and political education in their country.

On the second point, the state of political education in Canada, each of the four commissions rapidly came up against the fact that inadequate public knowledge and understanding of political institutions and processes would impede and condition their work. Thus, the Federal Cultural Policy Review found, in the mass of briefs submitted to it and at its many public meetings, that both the artistic community and the general public frequently did not know about even the most elementary division of responsibilities between, for example, federal and provincial governments, or between departments of government or their agencies, or between governmental bodies and private sector organizations. Similarly, the inquiry conducted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission into the state of human rights in the province found that knowledge and understanding about human rights legislation, practices, prerogatives, and institutions was far

from adequate and called for extensive work in the field of public education. The Commission on French Language Education drew attention to the lack of knowledge and thought about language issues and linguistic rights in the political process and in the educational system.

It was, however, the Commission on Canadian Studies that addressed most directly the question of the state of political education in Canada. It found it leaves much to be desired. There are several reasons for this, of course, but the two most important are, first, the inadequate job done in this field by the educational system right through from elementary school to university, and, second, the particular difficulty of fostering knowledge and understanding about our own distinctive political system and institutions in the face of the avalanche of information and misinformation about the American political system that sweeps into this country daily.

A number of briefs and representations, as well as the literature and information available to the Commission from other sources, made it clear that many teachers and students were to some extent dissatisfied with prevailing priorities and directions in Canadian political studies. The view was expressed over and over again to the Commission that, partly as a result of efforts to make their discipline as 'scientific' and 'value-free' as possible, too many political scientists in Canada were ignoring the political in Canadian politics. As one brief put it, 'Canadian students are exposed to a political science in which the major questions raised in political life are, for the most part, left unexamined'. Another noted that while Canadians have been debating issues of immense significance to their country, including questions about political and cultural sovereignty, economic nationalism, regional disparities, separatism, federalism, and external relationships, surprisingly little of the vigorous public discussion of these large questions has been reflected in the political science curriculum at some universities.

Noting that the political system plays such an important role in Canadian life, and is so pervasive in its influence, the Commission recommended strongly that no student be permitted to graduate from high school, and still less from university, without certain minimum levels of knowledge about the political institutions and political culture of this country. It proposed that provincial school systems that do not offer a course on the Canadian political system should do so, and that, in other parts of the school curriculum, more attention should be given to Canadian political matters.

For the university level, it recommended that students not majoring in political science, including those enrolled in programs in the professions and the physical and life sciences, should be encouraged to take at least one course in Canadian politics, and that

Canadian content in the political science curriculum should be substantially increased at many universities.

The third point, the contribution of investigatory commissions to political education, deserves far more recognition and attention than it has generally received. In particular, it has been ignored or lightly dismissed by those who take the easy and cynical view of commissions. Commissions are often described by cynics off-handedly and simplistically, as a delaying device, a cop-out, a means of rewarding political friends, a dodge to avoid difficult or unpopular policy decisions, and so on. In short, their motivation is said to be questionable and their utility dubious.

My own observation of the commission process has led me to a very different conclusion. Commissions can, and for the most part do, play a vital role in educating both government and the general public about political and public policy matters. Moreover, they are, or at least they can and should be, efficacious in assisting with the specific matters referred to them. For example, the Commission on French Language Secondary Education in Ontario made 76 recommendations of which some 70 have now been implemented. *Life Together*, the report of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, made 97 recommendations most of which have been implemented including the central proposal for the enactment of a new *Ontario Human Rights Code*. The Commission on Canadian Studies, in its three volumes, made 380 recommendations, as well as numerous specific suggestions in the text, and well over one-half of these have now been implemented or responded to in some significant way. So far, only a few of the 101 recommendations of the Federal Cultural Policy Review have been implemented. However, most are under study and many will in due course see action or influence events.

Thus, the experience of these four investigative commissions indicates that such work does often lead to substantial action. But it also suggests, on closer examination and reflection, that perhaps an even greater value of commissions lies in the contribution that they can make to public awareness, knowledge, and understanding, and to political education. The reports, activities, and hearings of each of these commissions played a useful part in generating knowledge, and in educating and informing public policy. In retrospect, it may be said of these and many other commissions that they had, if not as their major function, then at least as their major by-product, a service role of fundamental importance in enhancing political education in Canada.

In a moment of masterful understatement, Lord Haldane once urged on a British government that, in the sphere of public policy, "the duty of investigation and thought, as a preliminary to action, might with great advantage be more definitely recognized." (1918:6)

This observation might well be made of Canada today. The country faces enormous decisions in the coming decades that will require of its citizens a "duty of investigation and thought, as a preliminary to action." The format of the investigatory commission, with its provisions for public participation and public reporting, provides one of the best means available for Canadians to achieve this goal by contributing to and benefiting from informed study and critical assessment.

None the less, the investigatory commission, even as a concept for an approach to public questions, has received a bad press over the years which has, in turn, succeeded in giving it a bad image. Examples of this bad press range from the Tory pamphleteer who, in 1849, denounced government by commissions as illegal and pernicious (Toulin Smith, 1849) to the Leacockian political commentaries of A.P. Herbert a hundred years later who saw their appointment as simply a device to avoid action and, indeed, as *prima facie* evidence of a failure to govern. (Herbert, 1961)

Others see commissions as, simply, ineffectual or unnecessary. The standard, fashionable criticisms often highlight the charge that such investigations are partisan, packed with followers of the government or sponsoring body that appoints them. It is also said that the appointment of a commission is a mere trick to create the illusion of action, or to placate some special interest groups, or to distract attention, delay decisions, obscure the issues, or fudge a position. It is frequently charged that commissions result in no action, that their recommendations are never implemented. Or, alternatively, that their recommendations receive undue attention, are too often implemented, and are too influential, resulting in a downgrading or by-passing of elected institutions and of the democratic process. Critics will sometimes use both these criticisms at the same time, even though they clearly contradict one another. There is, too, the view that such investigations are a costly waste of money that could well be used to deal with whatever the problem is that the commission is examining.

There is, of course, some truth sometimes in all these criticisms. But many are no more than a repetition of a conventional litany of allegations based on a stereotype view of the nature and role of investigative commissions that is regurgitated by a sometimes lazy media in a knee-jerk reaction whenever the subject is raised. There are, however, other kinds of reservations about the investigative commission as an institution that involve a deeper level of criticism and that require a more serious consideration than they have so far received. These have to do with the commission process and its consequences for parliamentary government. The habit of invoking commissions for help may involve some turning away by ministers

from parliament and from parliamentary committees as a source of opinion and advice, and some diminution in the role of the elected members of parliament. It may even be argued that the use of investigative commissions entails some weakening of the fibre of democratic government by taking a significant role away from the elected institutions. (Cartwright, 1975)

There are, too, serious questions about lack of continuity and of responsibility inherent in a reliance upon commissions. Attention has been drawn to "the fitful characteristics of Royal Commission inquiries", contrasting their short life and *ad hoc* purpose with the need for on-going work by continuing bodies that can provide a steady accumulation of information and results. (Hodgetts, 1964) In a thoughtful paper, Professor G.B. Doern amplified this view. Noting that a commission "has no responsibility whatever to implement its own recommendations", he contended that "the main problem with royal commissions is that they do not provide for a continuity between recommendation and execution". (Doern, 1967) Going further, this author argued that there is an incompatibility between the royal commission technique and most of the modern policy problems that have to be faced. He called for "recognition of the inherent defects and inadequacies of the commission technique" for which he found a relatively limited utility. As an alternative, he urged the development of permanently endowed research institutes centred at Canadian universities, a line of argument that springs perhaps naturally, and not uncomfortably, to the academic mind.

This view of a probable decreasing role for commissions, arising from their inherent limitations, has not, in fact, been borne out by subsequent events. On the contrary, another author noted, writing not long afterwards, "Clearly, royal commissions are being used to a much greater extent than they were formerly for the investigation of national problems of considerable magnitude". (Courtney, 1969) The recent work, for example, of the Macdonald Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada and the Applebaum-Hébert Review of Federal Cultural Policy indicates that this continues to be the case. However, the concerns and cautions expressed by Professor Doern and others have no doubt played a part in adapting the role of the investigatory commission to better meet the changing needs of the times.

If, as Professor Doern concluded, the ultimate purpose of commissions is only "to secure information as a basis for policy", then he may be correct in his judgement that there are more effective ways to achieve this goal, including the endowment of university research institutes. But if a major part of a commission's role is also to enlarge public knowledge and understanding of the issues, to heighten awareness, and thus to contribute to the entire process of political

education, then one must reach a very different conclusion about the value of their work.

A large contributor to the misimpressions that exist about commissions, and the widely differing views about their utility, is the fact that so little is known about them. At the outset of his authoritative study of the subject, Professor T.J. Cartwright reported his surprise, given their long-standing and important role, that "there has until now been no systematic study of what they are and how they work"; there is "an astonishing dearth of materials." (Cartwright, 1975) Investigative commissions and committees, he noted, constitute a unique and ubiquitous institution of government, show a quite remarkable degree of flexibility and adaptiveness, and provide an unparalleled mechanism for public participation in government. To these three characteristics a fourth might well be added: they make a powerful contribution to the process of political education. Indeed, in the course of their work, investigative commissions become a kind of classroom for the nation.

The educational function of investigative commissions is exercised in a variety of ways. Most directly, it provides opportunities for members of the public, as well for the commissioners and government, to receive information, to learn what one another thinks, and to understand better the spectrum of perspectives that exist on every issue. Government, the public, and the commissioners are all educated by the process. Research will be generated that will enlarge the knowledge base and, in turn, become a factor in teaching. Common misperceptions and false stereotypes can be identified and exposed. "Laying ghosts and correcting misconceptions of conventional wisdom is a legitimate function for royal commissions." (Hanson, 1969:362). The public education, both political and otherwise, that commissions engender "affects public acceptance, which must precede any formulation of policy." (Walls, 1969:367).

While the most obvious and tangible result of the labours of a commission will be its report, as the official testament discharging its formal mandate, the educational consequences of its work often transcend the importance of its specific conclusions and recommendations. The immediate, shorter term consequences of the educational contribution made by an investigative commission may sometimes be seen in the public responses that it elicits even before it reports. The heightened awareness that arises from the appointment of a commission, and from its activities, can in itself cause movement and change. The very fact of the commission's existence and the tenor of its inquiries may, intentionally and unintentionally, cast its shadow before it and achieve results before it concludes its work. For example, the public hearings of the Ontario Ministerial Commission on French Language Secondary Education created an atmosphere of

public understanding that resulted in the resolution of a French-language school dispute in Sturgeon Falls before the Commission presented its report. Similarly, thought and activity prompted by the work of the Commission on Canadian Studies caused or facilitated numerous positive developments in that field before the Commission's report, ranging from curriculum reviews at many universities, colleges, and schools, to the establishment of the Chair in Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

However, the continuing and longer-term educational value of the work done or generated by investigative commissions is of even greater significance than the immediate responses that may be elicited at the time the work is being done, substantial and underestimated though these often are. The research undertaken and published by commissions, and the thinking encapsulated in their reports or fostered by them, provide a reservoir of knowledge and researched information that is a significant national asset. Generations of students, teachers, politicians and policy-makers, have drawn, for example, upon the research, the publications, and the thinking of the Rowell-Sirois Commission, of the Massey-Levesque Commission on the State of the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada, and of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, to mention but a few; and they will continue to do so.

Second only to providing an information base for policy directions in decision-making, it is this longer term educational contribution of commissions that is their major public service. Indeed, reflection and the passage of time may suggest that the educational function of investigative commissions in itself more than justifies their role in our society. It may well be their greatest value. The fact that so much of their work does result in concrete action could be a pure bonus.

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Commentary:

The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada

Donald S. Macdonald

The Royal Commission I headed had two sets of public hearings. The first process was really intended to be one in which we would ask the public to respond. We had enormous response, rather more from organizations than from individual members of the public, although it was amazingly varied from city to city. Members of the public came and sat all day and listened. It was often surprising to talk to them afterwards about the results of doing it. In the second set of hearings, we brought the elite together to engage in the process of genuine enlightenment.

The clearest message that came through is that national groups, often formed around a single idea or a single point in the political spectrum, are one of the more effective ways to carry forward a series of ideas, which will then be adopted throughout the country. I am thinking of a variety of groups, including The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which is at a very different point in the spectrum, and The Canadian Manufacturers' Association.

We went from city to city, to various provinces, and found that the same concepts were basically being advanced by each group, often not only in the same idiom, but even in the same words. It was quite clear that the process of education had been affected from that standpoint. It was education, but I am not sure that it was necessarily enlightenment. With the businessmen, for example, you would get the classic statement that government was spending too much money,

that it was to back out of the lives of people and was to reduce these expenditures, and then about two or three paragraphs later, the same individual would then invite further federal government expenditures in his particular community to carry out certain objectives. And not only did the spokesman apparently not recognize the contradiction in which he had just engaged, but when you put the contradiction to him, he still did not feel that the two positions were in any sense antithetical. In terms of getting a message out, that kind of organization is certainly effective. Whether it gets a reflective analysis of the message that is put out is another question.

There was the occasional welcome example of an independent personality, an individual who had quite clearly thought out the ideas for herself, or himself, and who came forward and expressed views in a very refreshing way. This phenomenon very often occurred outside the great metropolitan centres. Because of the ground to be covered we had to divide into teams, and I was on the Prince George team. As I went through the list of the participants the names came back to me again: the woman who is the librarian in the public library there had a well-developed concept that, just as Carnegie had put books in the public library, so there was an enormous opportunity for Canada to use computer technology added to the satellite to communicate with people.

What was the effect of the hearings? I do not think the immediate effect on the public was very great, but I can recall that throughout most of its life the commission did not enjoy very good press. The press gallery rose with fits of scoffing at the appointment of the commission in the last years of the Trudeau government. There was a certain amount of focus on the compensation paid to the chairman over that period of time, and so the metropolitan newspapers scarcely covered the commission at all in the news stories. When we were in Toronto, the editorial pages were among the principal national scoffers and there was therefore not a vehicle to get out to the public the notion that important themes were being discussed.

On the other hand, let me say that the report seems to have had an impact on the media in the longer run. It is now referred to as some kind of gospel. That may have something to do with the change of government. Even in the editorial pages of *The Globe and Mail*, from time to time an excerpt is given from the commission as the accepted right thinking on a particular question. So one makes progress over a period of time, and perhaps that is one of the ways of political education.

Finally, as was the case with the Gordon Commission or the Rowell-Sirois Commission, the 72 volumes of research which our Commission produced are in a certain sense milestones in a kind of a

Canadian academic record or library. I am told by members of the student body and by academic friends that indeed this or that volume has now become a point of reference in what they do. So that may be another kind of political education – in essence, capturing in a readily available set of volumes the academic thinking on particular questions at this time, and carrying it on to the next generation of students to work on it.

Commentaire:

Les audiences publiques de la commission d'enquête sur l'assurance-chômage

Claude Forget

C'est par des audiences publiques, parfois parlementaires, ou par des commissions d'enquête qu'on cherche à susciter et à harnacher l'intérêt du public pour telle ou telle question. Malheureusement, nous gâchons largement ces occasions. Ceux qui s'expriment en audience privée et en audience publique devant les commissions d'enquête, font certes l'éducation des commissaires eux-mêmes. Mais, pour ce qui est de l'éducation du public, bien sûr, c'est le processus public qui domine et ce processus, à cause des traditions que l'on a encouragées, est livré à des excès de langage, voire même à des excès de pensée. L'audience publique est devenue un exercice non pas de débat, mais une plate-forme qui permet à des groupes de se faire entendre, et qui leur permet de se faire entendre d'autant mieux et par un public d'autant plus large que les positions qu'ils expriment sont des positions unilatérales et même extrêmes. Je dirais que leur accès aux médias, à ces moments-là, est presque proportionnel à l'excès des propos tenus par les groupes.

J'ai été frappé, au cours des audiences publiques de la commission que j'ai présidée, par la surdité délibérée des groupes organisés. On défend, bien sûr, sa cause; on le fait éloquemment et avec beaucoup de force, mais on fait comme s'il n'y avait sur terre aucune autre opinion que celle que l'on exprime, au moment où l'on exprime. On sait bien que la réalité est différente, mais on refuse même de reconnaître l'existence d'opinions divergentes. C'est la façon la plus commode, bien sûr, de ne pas se faire déranger dans son exposé.

Le temps accordé aux audiences publiques est très limité. Selon la tradition, les commissaires écoutent tout le monde. Comme il y a toujours des centaines d'intervenants, le temps disponible pour entendre chacun est extrêmement limité. Le contre-interrogatoire serré ou les débats qui permettraient d'exposer la faiblesse des positions des uns et des autres n'ont pas lieu. C'est donc une occasion manquée de faire de l'éducation politique. C'est très dommage, parce que la commission d'enquête est un instrument qui pourrait être beaucoup plus puissant qu'il ne l'est parce qu'on l'utilise à mauvais escient.

Chapter 13:

Political Education Through Youth Programs

John Reid

There are a number of political education programs in Canada directed at students in senior high school. Though they vary in size and objectives, each has carved out a special niche in response to what its promoters saw as important needs to be met. Interestingly, all of these programs function outside the traditional educational system, although they do depend on the active cooperation of the various educational authorities for their recruitment of students.

In this article, I have focused on the three schemes which provide a direct learning environment: Adventure in Citizenship, Forum for Young Canadians, and Encounters with Canada (Terry Fox) Program. I did not include the various parliamentary simulations, including the Commonwealth and United Nations ones. This choice was made because the three forum-type programs have a number of items in common as well as different approaches. They are Ottawa-based, for example, with access to our national symbols and to individuals who work in a national environment. Two of the three, Adventure in Citizenship and Terry Fox, started with extensive sponsorship, while Forum for Young Canadians has been able to develop its sponsorship over time. They do not compete directly with each other either for students or in the nature of their activities, but rather are complimentary. They all provide an impressive opportunity for political education for Canadian senior high school students.

Adventure in Citizenship

This is the oldest of the three programs. It began in the 1930s as a project of a number of Rotary Clubs which would send students to Ottawa to be billeted by members of the Ottawa Rotary Club and their friends. Over the years, the National Capital Commission joined in the sponsorship. The program is well thought out, provides access to our national symbols and gives the students opportunities to question people deeply involved in the nation's business. One of the highlights is the Wednesday evening dinner with Members of Parliament. If an individual's Member cannot be present, the student will be seated with a Member from the same region. Attendance by Cabinet Ministers is frequent, and last year, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Mulroney attended the dinner.

The program is billed as an "Adventure in Citizenship" and citizenship development remains the purpose of its activities. Consequently, students are taken on a number of tours around the National Capital Region to see the public monuments of our history. There are a number of dinners with impressive invited guests. And there is a series of speakers on a variety of topics, normally changed each year so that the program is tailored to current events.

Student delegates are selected in a variety of ways. Normally, there is consultation with the high school and the local Rotary Club. Those who are chosen make a presentation both before and after their participation in the Adventure, giving valuable experience in public speaking. There is no cost to the student who is chosen to participate in the Adventure, the costs being underwritten by the local Rotary Club. Students give the program high marks; it continues to provide an excellent learning opportunity.

Forum for Young Canadians

The Forum began 12 years ago when a group of civil servants, academics and individuals from the private sector came together to plan a program to teach young Canadians how their political system worked. In the middle 1970s, the debate over Quebec separatism dominated Canadian political concerns and that debate was a prime motivating factor in the establishment of the Forum. The founders set up a non-profit corporation called the Foundation for the Study of Processes of Government in Canada, which funded and operated the "Forum for Young Canadians."

The organization has developed an academic curriculum to illustrate how the Canadian Parliamentary system works—or does not work. The instructors in the course are drawn from both participants in the Canadian government, whether from the political

or civil service sectors, and from the non-governmental world. Sessions are held in the Parliament Buildings or other government facilities. The usual method of instruction is for invited guests to speak for 15 to 20 minutes, describing what they themselves do, where they fit within the system, and how they relate to other individuals and components of the system. Speakers also talk about the problems they face in doing their work, and current policy questions they are working on at that time. The emphasis is on how the governmental system works, what the process is like, and how the actors and issues relate to each other. Then students are invited to question the speaker. After the formal session is over, guests normally remain to talk informally with interested students. All sessions are bilingual and simultaneous translation is available.

Students attending the Forum also participate in three simulations. The focus of the first is Cabinet decision-making, and of the second is the House of Commons with a Prime Minister making a policy statement. On the final day, a simulated Federal-Provincial Conference takes place, in which students in their roles as Prime Minister, Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, etc. set the agenda for the Conference and debate the questions they have deemed important. While in Ottawa, students are given a tour of the city and visit Government House, the Supreme Court, and the Parliament Buildings, where they sit in the House of Commons and the Senate. They also host a dinner, at which they invite their MPs to meet with them.

There are four sessions of the Forum with each session having about 125 students, five per cent of whom in 1987 were Native. Recruitment is done through the high schools, with each school asked to nominate two students in the senior years. Selection Committees in each province make the selection, based on criteria of leadership, knowledge, character and academic excellence. The Forum seeks "all-rounders" as its participants and looks for students who are likely to be leaders in their communities in the future. Costs are met by the students, with the current fee being $525. However, the Department of the Secretary of State provides a subsidy of over half the cost of air fares. Students are encouraged to do their own fund raising and the Forum provides a booklet to assist them in this task.

The Forum for Young Canadians is an academically oriented political education program. Students spend hours in lectures but they thrive on the experience. Forum participants reported to the Secretary of State researchers a very high degree of satisfaction with their experience.

Encounters with Canada

Encounters with Canada is a one-week program of Canadian studies held in Ottawa. It is in operation 24 weeks a year and brings about 3,000 students to Ottawa in groups of about 125. They live, and hold most sessions, at the Terry Fox Youth Centre in Ottawa, a facility dedicated to the program. It is the only one of the three forum-type operations to have its own facilities.

The weekly schedule is divided into two parts, with the first dealing with Canadian institutions such as Parliament and the court system. The second part of the week is organized around one of the six sub-themes: Arts and Culture; Science and Technology; Environment and Resources; Law; Economy; and Canadian Studies. This provides high school students with a unique opportunity to enrich what they have learned in school, and attracts students with a broad range of interests. Even if someone is attracted because of one of the sub-themes, that student is going to have the opportunity to learn a great deal about how the Canadian political system works.

In addition to presentations by knowledgeable individuals, the Centre has an active program of group discussions, audio-visual presentations, role-playing opportunities, visits and guided tours. A highlight comes when students get an opportunity to grill a Member of Parliament. The Terry Fox Centre has been experimenting with novel techniques. Through a program prepared in cooperation with the CloseUp Foundation in Washington, participants had an opportunity to debate the acid rain issue with a group of American students, through a one-hour teleconference. The result was aired on U.S. and Canadian television on February 18, 1987.

As with the other programs, participants are selected through the high school system. The students tend to come from Grade 11 and the target age groups are 15-, 16-, and 17-year-old students chosen on the basis of a regional quota system from across the country. Cost to the individual is $350 and there is assistance to the student in fund raising. Transportation is paid for by the Secretary of State through the Open House Program.

Terry Fox is a program which provides students with an opportunity to learn about how their country is governed while also developing their interests in other areas, such as Law, Economics, Arts and Culture. It is by far the largest of the three and, even though it has only been in place since 1982, about 23,000 students have participated.

Conclusion

The Adventure, Forum and Terry Fox programs take advantage of their location in Ottawa to reach out and involve individuals with great experience in national affairs, who are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge with young people. All three organizations offer to fortunate high school students an unparalleled opportunity to learn something of how Canadians govern themselves. Each approaches teaching students about the Canadian political system from a different point of view, appropriate to the type of student the program is directed at. For example, the Forum for Young Canadians is single-minded in its mission to explore the processes of Canadian government. Encounters with Canada is more catholic, offering a variety of courses to choose from in addition to its basic introduction to Canadian political institutions. The Adventure in Citizenship provides its students with opportunities to get a real feel for the whole system.

One must not forget that perhaps the most important aspect of the student's experience in one of these forums is simply meeting and living together for a week with fellow young Canadians. In going through this experience, a student quickly learns the diversity of the Canadian experience and the problems of making decisions for the good of the commonwealth.

If the teaching of how the Canadian political system works (or does not work) is not done extensively through the educational system, then the programs described above do provide an example of how it can be done in a way which captures the interest and enthusiasm of students. The success of these programs in involving students has been remarked on again and again by teachers. We know that providing an interesting course in how we make collective decisions, to call political education by another name, can be done. The question is, why have we decided not to give these courses in our schools?

Commentary:

The Role of Foundations

John Hobday

Foundations are uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to public policy debate and addressing fundamental issues in society, because they are not fettered by the governmental constraint of the four-year term, the media constraint of the 30-second clip, or the corporate constraints of the needs, demands and concerns about the shareholders.

There are about 700 foundations in Canada, and the great majority of them have operated in a very traditional and conservative mould. A few have begun to break out of that essentially reactive stance into a much more pro-active one, and I find this an enormously encouraging development. If one looks at the American foundations and the impact and influence of studies and actions of the Carnegie Foundation, Ford Foundation, and others over a period of time, we have had very, very little of that in this country. Foundations have played a low-key role. They have not tried to address themselves to bringing about fundamental change.

In our own case at Seagram's, we moved from a position about three years ago where we developed a focus on the elderly and seniors but, rather than addressing it in the way that perhaps a Kinsmen Club can, which is to provide wheelchairs and to fix up old people's homes, we have decided we will move into the area of trying to help bring about a network of seniors so they can influence public policy in a general way. We will try to bring all the seniors who have single issue concerns together to see if we cannot help the seniors community

in this country to influence public policy in a highly responsible kind of way over the long term. I do not know whether this will be echoed by the 699 other foundations, but I would like to think that perhaps we are moving in that kind of a direction.

Commentary:

The Role of Business

Tom d'Aquino

Business does care. The organization I represent, the Business Council on National Issues, has had since 1979 a task force on government organization. The very first item of business by that task force, composed of chief executive officers, was to produce a detailed and comprehensive study on parliamentary reform. You have to ask yourself what an organization made up of 150 chief executive officers that represents about 80% of private sector GNP in this country is doing looking at the issue of parliamentary reform.

The reason that group decided to look at parliamentary reform is because they thought parliamentary reform was important. There was a concern that the institution of Parliament, which in our civics and other classes is always referred to as the bedrock of government in this country, was really falling into disuse and to some extent into a position of disrepute. There was concern about lack of involvement on the part of back-benchers and the domination of the Prime Minister in the whole process.

So the group got together, interviewed about 65 parliamentarians, brought together some of the best brains in the country, and put together a major study on parliamentary reform. We then just did not write it and put it on the shelf; we took it to Mr. Clark, who had been recently elected, and in fact Mr. Clark said that the first item of business he would bring forward in the House would be a paper on parliamentary reform. And that is exactly what he did. The council also took the issue, in a limited way, to the streets of Canada

by publishing about 15,000 copies of our study, *Parliamentary Reform*, which was put into the bookstores across the country. It was all snapped up, and in fact we even did a second edition.

On the issue of constitutional reform, we studied it, produced a paper, but we did not, on that occasion, take a strong position one way or the other. What we did was publish 25,000 copies of a little booklet that again was put out into every bookstore in the country on what constitutional reform means. We relied every heavily on diagrams to explain the intricacies and the mysteries of the Canadian Constitution and what constitutional reform would mean.

Thirdly, we engaged in another major exercise on Senate reform. That one had, perhaps, slightly greater prompting, not from an economic point of view but from a political point of view, from our members of Western Canada, who once again are rising up and talking about an elected Senate with better representation. But we did produce a major study recommending Senate reform with equal representation from each of the provinces, again because we felt that a large part of the country was being left out of the political process.

If elites – business, or otherwise – begin to devote their time and some of their resources to those issues which they think are important then it is through those kinds of initiatives that at least a contribution can be made to political education. Our task force will certainly continue its work.

Chapter 14:

Political Education and Canadian Political Parties

Janine Brodie

Political parties have long been recognized and applauded as the central mechanisms in liberal democracies whereby social problems are translated into political solutions. Yet, surprisingly, much of the literature on political parties explicitly rejects the idea that political parties actively contribute to the political education of an electorate. Rather the "party democracy" and "consensus" schools suggest that the principal role of political parties is to survey and "accommodate" political demands that have been shaped or formed independently of their own activity. (Parenti, 1978) This popular view, sometimes explicitly advanced by party leaders and the media and implicitly by public opinion polls, holds that political parties simply reflect public opinion and, thus, are often captives of it.

This view of the role of political parties in liberal democracies is at best naive and at worst self-serving. We know that public opinion is not formed in a vacuum. Our opinions are informed and shaped by our environment and political parties are not independent from, but instead an integral part of that environment. Even though our everyday lives are increasingly implicated by political affairs, for most citizens politics is remote and intangible. Political parties and party leaders provide a major source of information and contact with what we would nominally call the political sphere. Indeed, their activities also influence what citizens hear about politics from other sources, such as the media. Their centrality is such that many

Canadians hold politics and political parties and elections to be synonymous.

Recognizing this, others have identified the contribution of political parties to public opinion formation as "structuring the vote," an activity which ranges from "the simple allocation of party labels to candidates to large-scale educational and propaganda campaigns." (King, 1969:113) Actually, we can identify two distinct ways in which political parties typically have structured the vote in western democracies – the class and brokerage systems. Each system has a quite distinct impact on how social problems present themselves to the public.

Mass political parties integrate voters into a system of partisan relations but they do much more than simply provide a label for the elites competing for public office. Democratic elections force political parties to differentiate themselves among the electorate. Forging electoral cleavages, however, is not automatic: parties must first identify for the electorate what dimensions of their social lives will be treated as political. In other words, before electoral alignments take shape, voters must be provided with a *definition of politics*: a means for identifying and assessing what is political among a multitude of on-going social problems and inter-relationships. From the vast array of tensions, differences and inequalities characteristic of any society, political parties choose which will be treated as political alternatives in the electoral process and thereby how the electorate will divide. In doing so, they simultaneously define for the electorate the content of politics and set the limits beyond which partisan politics is not encouraged to go. Whether a social problem is considered to be an economic, personal or political question is something set by this definition. Those social problems which are never included within the bounds of partisan debate remain invisible, ill-defined and left to the private sector or private life, if any resolution is to occur. (Brodie and Jenson, 1980)

Political parties obviously differ considerably among themselves in terms of the amount of information that they provide to the electorate about policy problems and alternatives. But keeping the electorate informed about the immediate policy agenda is not the primary contribution of political parties to political education. Rather, through the establishment of a definition of the political and a system of voter alignments, they inform us that politics is about ethnicity or region or religion or class or some other line of social demarcation. They set the boundaries around what we consider to be the appropriate content of politics and following that, the manner in which the problem is stated, the sort of approach made and even the categories in which conflicts and experiences are subsumed and ordered. Moreover, once a definition of politics is established in the

electorate, it is exceedingly resistant to change. Successive generations of voters and politicians themselves are educated to accept this definition as the substance of politics and the basis for political mobilization. Over time the prevailing definition of politics becomes embedded in the political culture.

The far-reaching implications of different definitions of politics on the political education of a nation can be illustrated by comparing the class and brokerage methods of structuring the vote. The class system, for the most part, is indigenous to Western Europe and emerged at the turn of the century when a number of socialist and labour parties entered democratic elections to represent the interests of the newly enfranchised working class. These parties differ considerably among themselves both in relation to their ideological position and electoral strength. For example, the British Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party are considered to be more moderate or reformist in their programmatic appeals than the Communist Parties of France and Italy. The electoral popularity of these parties also has varied across time and from country to country. Nevertheless, all class-based party systems share the following similarities. They are characterized by parties with well-defined and quite stable bases of electoral support among identifiable social groups. In addition, parties put more emphasis on ideology, programmes and principles than on individual leaders or candidates. They attempt to provide the electorate with a choice among competing world views, and consequently, an important part of their partisan activity involves convincing voters to adhere to their political ideology as well as to support their candidates. (Bottomore, 1984)

How then do voters learn to categorize and assess social problems in a class-based system of voter alignment? Three general observations are germane here. First, and most important, the party system signals to the electorate that political conflict is primarily about structural relations, specifically class relations in capitalist societies, and this particular definition is constantly reinforced in party rhetoric and by allied organizations and the media. As a result, on-going social problems are interpreted as being primarily about the distribution of social benefits among social classes rather than among the more intractable and divisive dimensions of ethnicity, region, religion and race. This, in turn, has important implications for the initiation and implementation of policy. Second, a class-based system encourages, although never fully achieves, stable voter alignments because parties are clearly perceived as representing different economic groups. Generation after generation learn to identify and assess parties in these terms. Finally, and following from the above, political parties in a class-based system are encouraged to develop and

articulate in their electoral platforms programmatic appeals and long-term development strategies.

Obviously, this system of vote structuring has encountered difficulties promoting so-called "post-industrial" concerns such as the equality of women and the environmentalism. It also would be misleading to suggest that short-term electoral appeals and leadership charisma do not play a part in the political calculus in a class-based system. Nevertheless, the emphasis on structural relations, economic identities, and programmatic appeals remain the key contributions of political parties to political education in this case. These are also the dimensions which contrast most markedly with a brokerage system.

The Canadian federal party system is characterized as a brokerage one. According to this perspective, two essentially similar bourgeois parties appeal to a variety of social interests, not in terms of class relations, principled differences or ideologies, but as "Tweedledee and Tweedledum." The party system is a competition among the Ins and the Outs, teams of office-seekers that present programmes and discuss issues in ways designed to maximize their support across as many groups in the electorate as possible. (Thorburn, 1984) Unlike a class system, brokerage parties maximize rather than minimize the social divisions in the electorate and constantly compete for the same policy space and the same votes.

This particular system of vote structuring has a number of consequences for a political system. (Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc and Pammett, 1984) First, the party system lacks mechanisms for policy innovation, which tends to be displaced onto the bureaucracy. The second consequence is partisan instability. Canadian voters can readily shift their vote from one major party to another because neither party takes a consistent or identifiable position across time. A third consequence is a resulting over-emphasis on leadership rather than policy. All of these consequences constitute a mirror-image of the class-based system and result from the particular definition of politics which has developed in Canada over the past century. This definition has necessitated a brokerage party system and has had a profound impact on the conduct of Canadian social and political life.

In the early years of Confederation, Canada did not have a fully developed two-party system. The Conservative and Liberal parties were initially only fragile coalitions of legislators who were connected to part of the capitalist class. (Brodie and Jenson, 1980) Moreover, it was never obvious in the first elections what the substance of electoral conflict would be: whether class, language, religion or some other social difference would define the support base of the federal parties. Certainly the possibilities for the emergence of a class-based party system were circumscribed by the fact that both parties were based in

the same class and that organizations of opposing classes, the farmers and the workers, were not yet sufficiently developed to challenge them. So how were the two parties to appeal for the votes and the loyalties of Canadians? The Conservative Party had the first success in this regard by defining themselves as the "nation-builders", as the party of the "national interest." By the turn of the century, however, the Liberal Party, aided by a legacy of ethnic and religious conflict and a series of opposition miscalculations, was able to create its own constituency by emphasizing religious and ethnic differences as a basis for electoral alignment. By 1896, it had firmly established itself as the party of the Francophones (and later other ethnic minorities) while the Conservatives solidified their base among Anglophone Canadians.

The party system thus became the exclusive domain of two parties representing the same class interest but differing in terms of ethnic and regional support bases. Over the years, their party organizations have remained skeletal and dominated by elites because electoral tasks have been relatively limited from one election to the next. The parties had to retain their traditional ethnic and regional support bases, usually by stressing these themes in their electoral rhetoric and maintaining organizational loyalties with patronage. Second, they had to attract new voters to their coalitions to achieve the necessary margin of victory, but not at the cost of alienating their traditional supporters. This was usually achieved with targeted and short-term electoral inducements.

The entrenchment of a cultural definition of politics necessitated a brokerage party system. Together they have set in place a rigid and short-sighted politics which in order to persist must constantly reinforce cultural identities to the exclusion of programmatic appeals. It has fashioned successive generations of citizens and political leaders to identify and assess politics as being about the distribution of power and social benefits between ethnic groups and across geographic space. In one election after the next, our major parties "broker" these identities by offering electoral goodies and the promise of a "better deal" than their competitors have provided in the past.

But this practice of brokerage politics, as we are all too painfully aware, only aggravates cultural tensions and presents almost insurmountable obstacles to the development of long-term and far-reaching policy initiatives. Our party system, in other words, has fashioned an electorate which equates politics with cultural identities and short-term appeals. As a result, our parties find a stable support base increasingly elusive. As successive national election studies and public opinion polls have demonstrated, voters readily shift their allegiances from one party to another because there are few enduring or perceptible differences between them.

Political parties contribute to the political education of a nation by establishing a definition of the political. This definition can take many forms but it is established relatively early in the life of a party system and is highly resistant to change. It encourages successive generations of both politicians and voters to identify particular social problems as being political to the exclusion of others and to behave accordingly. The content of this definition, therefore, has an important influence on the behaviour of parties and voters alike.

The cultural definition of Canadian partisan politics and its concomitant, brokerage politics, has left a legacy of weak party organizations which are trapped largely by conditions of their own making. Our federal parties do not broker because of the constraints imposed by the Canadian social fabric but rather because they have represented the same class interests and, over the last century, have fashioned a flexible electorate which translates politics almost solely in terms of cultural identity, "Ins and Outs," and competing packages of electoral goodies. In the process, they have largely circumvented the politics of class but not without cost to themselves or to the political education of the electorate. Our major parties are forced into a constant search for the right combination of short-term electoral appeals to offer to an increasingly unstable electorate. They are precluded from bold policy initiatives because this would threaten to realign the electorate. In the process, successive generations of Canadians have been drawn into a divisive and cynical conception of politics which denies them the opportunity to make hard choices about the future.

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Chapitre 15:

Les partis et l'éducation politique des citoyens

Vincent Lemieux

Les partis n'ont pas à éduquer directement les citoyens, mais ils ont à éduquer des militants, des leaders et des élus qui informeront les citoyens et leur permettront ainsi de mieux participer aux processus politiques. Même s'il y avait beaucoup d'avantages à ce qu'ils le fassent, il faut bien constater que les partis politiques canadiens, y compris les partis politiques québécois, consacrent bien peu de temps et d'efforts à ces activités, sauf dans des conjonctures particulières. Il est approprié de s'interroger sur ces carences et sur les conséquences qu'elles entraînent pour les partis, mais aussi pour l'ensemble du système politique.

L'éducation politique et ses objets

L'éducation politique est plus que l'information politique. C'est de l'information structurante qui permet d'interpréter l'information en la rapportant à des connaissances de base.

Les députés qui pensent avoir été élus par leurs propres mérites, mais avoir été battus par la vague qui s'est déferlée contre leur parti, se trompent. Le nouveau parti de gouvernement qui estime que les électeurs ont voté positivement pour lui, contre l'ancien parti de gouvernement, se trompe aussi. Et ces erreurs peuvent être lourdes de conséquences. L'éducation à nos institutions politiques et aux processus qui s'y déroulent est nécessaire à la bonne compréhension

des événements de tous les jours. L'information structurante, celle qui permet d'apprendre à apprendre, donne un sens à l'information structurée, qui sans elle n'est qu'un vain savoir.

Il y a au moins quatre domaines à propos desquels les partis auraient avantage à fournir des connaissances de base à leurs adhérents. Le premier est celui de l'organisation et du fonctionnement des systèmes politiques, les nôtres mais aussi ceux d'autres pays. Des services de la Chambre des communes ou de l'Assemblée nationale à Québec, ou encore les partis eux-mêmes donnent bien de l'information élémentaire aux nouveaux élus sur les institutions politiques où ils auront à opérer, mais l'organisation et le fonctionnement du système débordent largement les seules institutions. Ils renvoient entre autres aux fonctions indispensables du système politique, qui elles aussi pourraient être enseignées. Ces connaissances de base aideraient les partisans à mieux comprendre et à interpréter plus justement ce qui leur arrive.

Le deuxième domaine, rattaché au premier, est celui de l'opinion publique, entendue au sens large. Les partis ont bien leurs maisons de sondage préférées et parfois leurs propres sondeurs, qui tiennent les dirigeants informés de l'évolution de l'opinion publique. Mais ces dirigeants et encore plus les simples élus ou les organisateurs connaissent assez mal la méthodologie des sondages et surtout les caractéristiques de l'opinion. Comme le répétait V.O. Key jr. à la fin de sa vie, les électeurs ne sont pas fous, contrairement à ce que se plaisent à penser les politiciens déçus, et parce qu'ils ne sont pas fous il ne faut pas agir sur eux comme s'ils l'étaient. (Key, 1960) Il y a encore beaucoup à enseigner là-dessus, dans les partis comme chez les autres interprètes de l'opinion.

Les partis qui ont une idéologie ou un programme doivent aussi en instruire leurs membres. Ils doivent surtout les instruire de la place changeante des idéologies et des programmes. Et si l'idéologie ou le programme ne sont pas très bien définis, il y a lieu d'enseigner tout au moins l'histoire du parti avec les choix et les partis pris qu'elle a charriés, de façon à éviter les erreurs du passé ou encore à en exploiter à nouveau certaines réussites. Par exemple, les conservateurs québécois connaissent-ils l'existence du livre de Marc La Terreur, "*Les tribulations des conservateurs du Québec*"? (La Terreur, 1973)

Enfin les partis peuvent aussi se préoccuper d'éducation à l'éthique politique comme éthique des affaires publiques, distincte de celle des affaires privées. Cette éducation est particulièrement appropriée pour beaucoup de nouveaux députés ou de nouveaux organisateurs des partis, venant du secteur privé, et qui ont tendance à croire que l'État doit être géré comme une "business". L'éthique des affaires publiques se distingue en deux points tout au moins de celle

des affaires privées: l'État ne peut éviter d'être un redistributeur parce qu'il a à se préoccuper de la stabilité de l'ensemble du système sociétal, contrairement aux entreprises; et l'État, s'il est partial dans l'élaboration de ses politiques, parce que dirigé par un parti contre d'autres partis, doit demeurer impartial dans l'exécution des politiques.

Les partis éducateurs et les autres

Il y a des partis qui sont condamnés à faire de l'éducation politique. Pensons aux partis communistes, qu'ils soient au gouvernement ou dans l'opposition. Ils ont une idéologie et un programme dont ils doivent convaincre leurs militants pour que ceux-ci à leur tour convainquent la population. Ils ont à former leurs élus ou leurs futurs élus pour qu'ils fassent adopter des politiques conformes à l'idéologie et au programme.

Le Parti du Crédit social s'est trouvé dans une position un peu semblable au Canada. Armé d'une idéologie et d'un programme nouveaux et un peu insolites aux yeux des Canadiens, il a dû former ses militants à la doctrine du major Douglas, pour que ceux-ci répandent ensuite la bonne nouvelle parmi les électeurs. L'éducation politique était d'autant plus nécessaire parmi les créditistes que leurs militants venaient souvent de milieux modestes, où les degré de scolarisation n'était pas très élevé.

Au contraire, le Parti québécois à ses origines regroupait surtout des jeunes gens très scolarisés. Mais leur éducation politique demeurait imparfaite. À plusieurs reprises, au début des années 70, le parti a organisé des séances de formation pour ses militants, il a publié des notes de cours et d'autres documents portant principalement sur le système politique québécois. Tout cela a certainement contribué à la qualité du travail des militants.

On retrouve des initiatives semblables dans les partis socialistes naissants de l'Europe du dix-neuvième siècle, qui avaient à encadrer et à éduquer les masses d'individus auxquelles on venait d'accorder le droit de suffrage. Encore au début des années 50, Maurice Duverger caractérisait les partis de masses, par rapport aux partis de cadres, par leur volonté d'assurer l'éducation politique de leurs membres. (Duverger, 1951) Ajoutons que cette volonté est généralement forte tant que le parti n'a pas accédé à la direction du gouvernement. Quand il goûte aux délices du pouvoir, et même quand il est replongé ensuite dans l'opposition, la volonté d'éducation politique se perd.

En résumé, et si on s'en tient aux systèmes partisans de type compétitif, on peut dire qu'il y a d'autant plus de chances qu'un parti fasse de l'éducation politique qu'il est de nature programmatique, qu'il ne s'est jamais trouvé ailleurs que dans l'opposition, et que ses

adhérents n'ont pas au départ de bien grandes connaissances de base sur la politique. Cela explique que les grands partis politiques au Canada font assez peu d'éducation politique, si ce n'est de façon exceptionnelle. Ils se privent ainsi et ils privent le système politique où ils opèrent de retombées positives. C'est du moins ce qu'on peut tenter de démontrer.

Les conséquences de l'éducation politique ou de son absence peuvent être évaluées dans chacune des composantes des partis: leur composante interne, leur composante gouvernementale et leur composante publique. (Lemieux, 1985)

L'éducation politique et la composante interne des partis

C'est de la composante interne des partis que viennent les initiatives en matière d'éducation politique. Encore faut-il que cette composante existe et qu'elle ait une certaine autonomie par rapport aux deux autres. La composante interne, c'est le parti en lui-même avec ses principales instances: congrès, conseil général, comité exécutif, commissions spécialisées, assistées par des permanents. Cette composante a pour fonction de donner des orientations à l'action publique et à l'action gouvernementale du parti, de le caractériser par rapport aux autres partis. Elle est généralement importante par rapport aux autres dans les partis naissants, surtout s'ils sont programmatiques, ou encore dans les partis qui sont dans l'opposition. Les partis de gouvernement ont tendance à négliger, au Canada comme ailleurs, cette composante interne et à la soumettre aux exigences de la composante gouvernementale ou de la composante publique. C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles ils n'arrivent plus, après un certain temps, à se renouveller, et sont entraînés à devenir purement opportunistes.

L'éducation politique des militants et des leaders du parti est un excellent moyen de ressourcer le parti, d'instaurer en lui des débats démocratiques et de lui permettre de s'ajuster à un environnement changeant. Les idéologies et les programmes partisans ne peuvent plus être pensés de la même façon aujourd'hui qu'il y a dix ou vingt ans. L'intelligence pratique tend à remplacer les idéologies décrochées du concret, un nouveau discours de la méthode s'impose face aux programmes préfabriqués et aux promesses électorales. Il ne s'agit plus de dire: nous allons réaliser le libre échange ou nous allons privatiser parce que nous voulons moins d'État, mais de montrer ce qui est indispensable dans l'action de l'État d'aujourd'hui et d'indiquer les démarches à suivre pour en arriver un jour à organiser l'État autour de ces fonctions indispensables.

L'éducation politique et la composante gouvernementale des partis

Au moins deux des domaines d'éducation politique qui ont été signalés plus haut sont tout particulièrement pertinents à la composante gouvernementale du parti, c'est-à-dire à ses activités dans l'appareil gouvernemental, qu'il dirige le gouvernement ou qu'il soit dans l'opposition. Il y a d'abord les connaissances de base sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement des systèmes politiques. Ces connaissances doivent porter sur le système politique et les institutions où se trouvent les élus, mais aussi sur d'autres systèmes politiques, qui pourraient inspirer les réformes à apporter à notre propre système. On peut donner l'exemple du Sénat et du mode de scrutin. Des comités du Parlement ou encore des commissions royales d'enquête ont abordé ces problèmes, mais de façon générale la culture des députés sur ces deux aspects de nos institutions demeure peu développée. Plusieurs s'imaginent qu'un régime politique de tradition britannique et de nature fédérale comme celui du Canada ne peut fonctionner autrement qu'avec le Sénat et le mode de scrutin que nous avons, alors que les expériences américaine, australienne et suisse – pour s'en tenir aux systèmes fédéraux les mieux connus – démontrent le contraire.

Il y a aussi l'éducation en matière d'éthique politique. C'est une grande illusion de s'imaginer qu'une personne qui a réussi dans le secteur privé peut se transformer du jour au lendemain en un expert des affaires publiques. En plus des deux caractéristiques distinctes de l'éthique des affaires publiques qui ont déjà été signalées, celle de la redistribution et de l'impartialité dans l'exécution, on peut ajouter l'éducation à la démocratie, qui n'a pas beaucoup de sens dans le secteur privé. (Schattschneider, 1960) Selon Schattschneider la démocratie a des chances de se réaliser quand des leaders et des organisations, en compétition entre eux, définissent les problèmes et les solutions de façon telle que le peuple peut participer aux processus de décision. On est loin des batailles d'avocats partisans qui caractérisent souvent les débats parlementaires. La démocratie demeure une "idée neuve", sur laquelle beaucoup d'éducation politique reste à faire.

L'éducation politique et la composante publique des partis

Dans sa composante publique le parti recherche les appuis des électeurs et des groupes, il traduit leurs aspirations de façon à ce que les politiques gouvernementales en tiennent compte et il explique ces politiques quand elles sont élaborées ou une fois qu'elles ont été

adoptées. L'éducation à la connaissance de l'opinion publique et à l'action sur l'opinion publique sont tout spécialement requises dans cette composante.

En plus de former des militants qui n'interprètent pas de façon trop simpliste et trop méprisante les sondages d'opinion, les partis ont aussi à former des leaders d'opinion qui soient des multiplicateurs de l'action des partis dans leurs milieux. Au Québec, c'est ainsi que le Crédit social s'est répandu dans les années 60, et que le Parti québécois a fait de même dans les années 70. Les fameux discours de Réal Caouette à la télévision, le dimanche soir, n'auraient pas eu tant de répercussions si des leaders créditistes ne les avaient repris, dès le lundi matin, pour convaincre leurs compagnons de travail d'adhérer à la cause créditiste. Des organisateurs créditistes avaient compris dès ce moment, comme les militants péquistes dix ans plus tard, que dans une société où la scolarisation des jeunes s'étendait, il fallait désormais convaincre ceux-ci d'abord, qui se chargeraient ensuite de convaincre leurs parents. Ils n'avaient pas appris cela par les sondages, mais par les connaissances de base qu'ils avaient tirées de leur expérience du terrain.

On peut craindre à cet égard que les techniques modernes de marketing politique, malgré toutes leurs qualités, en viennent à créer dans les partis un petit groupe d'experts qui commandent les opérations, en faisant l'économie de l'éducation politique des militants. Il y a des enseignements que les sondages même les plus raffinés ne peuvent donner avec la même intensité et la même vérité que les contacts sur le terrain. Un ancien ministre du Parti québécois, qui avait démissionné en 1982, racontait qu'il avait acquis la conviction de l'impopularité de son parti non pas tellement en lisant les résultats des sondages, mais en entendant les gens lui dire, immanquablement: "Vous devez donc être content de ne plus être ministre de ce gouvernement."

Conclusion

Il faut bien constater que, sauf dans des conditions spéciales, les partis au Canada investissent peu dans l'éducation politique de leurs membres et qu'ainsi ils contribuent peu à l'éducation politique des Canadiens. Ils fonctionnent plutôt avec l'information politique qui leur est disponible, les connaissances de base étant réservées à quelques experts qui entourent les dirigeants ou aux dirigeants eux-mêmes. En ce domaine comme en d'autres nos partis sont assez aristocratiques. Les préoccupations à courte échéance laissent peu de place à des entreprises à plus longue échéance axées sur l'éducation politique des membres.

Pourtant, aussi bien dans leur composante publique que dans leur composante gouvernementale ou que dans leur composante interne, le rendement des partis serait sans doute augmenté par une meilleure éducation politique sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement des système politiques, sur l'opinion publique, sur les principes qui doivent guider l'action des partis, ou sur l'éthique des affaires publiques par rapport à celle des affaires privées.

L'éducation politique combat les préjugés et les fausses évidences en ces domaines, elle enseigne non pas tellement le doute que la relativité des solutions et des convictions. Elle enseigne surtout qu'on peut améliorer l'action en s'instruisant de ses erreurs. En cela elle est une condition de la démocratie, dont Schatischneider disait que c'était un système pour des gens qui ne sont pas trop sûrs d'avoir raison.

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Commentary:

Educative Activities of a Political Party

Hugh Segal

The political party with which I am affiliated has an activist and determined public education and outreach program which operates both at the federal and provincial level. The quality and consistency of that program may vary based upon the resources of the provincial or federal party involved. However, the activities of the Conservative party in educating the public about the political process, the issues and concerns that constitute that process and, most importantly, how individual citizens can play a role within that process, far outstrip those of any corporation. In terms of actual community penetration, they may outstrip the activity of many post-secondary educational institutions as well.

The national Conservative party which operates both with a professional staff in the headquarters in Ottawa, bolstered by regional offices across the country, and through volunteers in riding associations, has a host of activities on the national and regional level. These constitute focused, and in my view, meaningful contributions to public education. A list would include the following:

1. The cabinet is finishing a series of policy information sessions across Canada where local communities are invited to participate with local riding associations in seeking information from the government ministers on policy developments, issues and directions. Those events are taking place uniformly across

the country and the involvement of local communities is encouraged and in fact solicited.

2. The Progressive Conservative women's caucus, operating in Ottawa with branch operations across Canada, has a regular schedule of seminars and symposia on issues of importance not only to women but to all Canadians.

3. The various committees of our national caucus involve a host of concerns from agriculture, to national defence, to justice, to northern development. They regularly tour the country and participate in party sponsored events, interacting with the business community, labour and the local community at large.

4. Every riding association in the country is mandated to hold a general annual meeting, not only for the election of local officers but for the community outreach as well.

5. The Progressive Conservative Youth Federation of Canada, which is the largest of the three youth federations in the country, is represented on every Canadian campus and on the campus of most junior colleges, Cegeps and Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. Most of those organizations have several events a year which focus on policy, policy issues, recruitment and involvement of colleagues on campus in the political process.

6. The party's publication process is focused largely on sharing information at the local level about the party's activities, the government's programs, and the individual activities of members of parliament and cabinet ministers. While that material is by necessity promotional, it is also informational in large measure.

7. The Progressive Conservative Speakers Bureau responds to requests for P.C. speakers at local community events and symposia, and actively solicits such opportunities. These spokespeople, who constitute the core of the national Conservative party, say what they believe in and what they are trying to achieve, and they really do constitute one of the most effective means of reaching out to educate the public about the process, the issues, the concerns of the politics of this country.

In Ontario, where the party is in an attack mode, doing its best to discredit the incumbent administration, public education activities have really focused around the policy development process. For the

Ontario Conservative party policy development is an instrument that involves the public rejuvenation that is absolutely fundamental to the survival and competitiveness of Ontario Conservatives. This process began with a host of regional policy conferences in each part of Ontario, where local spokespersons for educational, agricultural, healthcare, social policy, business and labour groups were invited to take the stage in symposia organized by the local Conservative party but open to the public at large to express their concerns about the issues that faced the province at the time and what they expected a new Conservative party to address and assess. Those events in the seven key regional centres of the province drew large audiences and were well attended by members of the Conservative provincial caucus and in each case, by the provincial leader. At the end of each event, the leader did not offer a quick statement of party policy, but reflected on what he and his caucus colleagues had heard from those in the community, who had come to participate in the process. Policy development and refinement continued in the same manner.

If I have one regret about the public education process as it is engaged in by political parties it is that we have shied away from a focused, thoughtful and detailed policy education process. It is for me disappointing that a serious policy journal, a serious expression of conservative thought, ideas, issues and concerns is not financed and published by the Conservative party in a fashion that would stimulate a serious policy debate on future alternatives for Canadian economic, social, and international policy. In the United States, this vacuum has been filled largely by conservative foundations. The economy in this country is probably too thin to support a similar kind of approach and so the burden really does fall to the major political parties to sustain that effort. Until the parties are truly serious about investing real dollars and serious resources in policy journals that develop thoughtful debate, then there will be always reason to work harder on the public education process.

Commentary:

Education Through Policy Debate

Roy Romanow

At the core of democratic politics lies the belief that citizens, properly informed and interested in public affairs, are capable of transcending the narrow limits of individual interests, class bias, regional and ethnic myopia. Ideally, public discussion of public issues will force all concerned citizens to re-examine their prejudices, to see things from the point of view of others with different backgrounds and interests. The cut and thrust of political debate, like the argument of lawyers in a court room, serves to focus public discussion about concrete alternatives. Conflict is one of the important elements of politics, and politics is one of the best ways to focus attention on competing values, to force all the actors in the public arena to re-examine and re-assess their positions. By conducting policy debate, political parties perform a real educative function.

Let me illustrate with some recent examples. First, consider briefly the political debate that led to the adoption of Medicare in Canada. Tommy Douglas would not have succeeded in implementing Medicare in Saskatchewan without the support of an informed public. The debate was often bitter, highlighted by the doctors' strike and the organization of public interest groups, both in support and in opposition to the government's initiative.

Medicare was not adopted in Saskatchewan merely because it could be demonstrated to be "popular" in a public opinion poll; the polls would probably have shown general support for the proposition, but before the controversy was over, public perception of the issue had

been affected by the debate itself in ways that were quite unpredicable when the process began. The debate placed a whole series of public issues before the people of the province: to what extent has the community an obligation to provide health care for all its citizens? How can public good be reconciled with individual interests? I do not think it is too much to suggest that both sides of the debate came out of it wiser, or that this episode of political history contributed to the image we have today of our country. The debate educated the people of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan experience helped to educate the rest of the country.

Let me turn to a more recent debate – that which led to the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and repatriation of the constitution. In the beginning, many politicians regarded the exercise in constitutional renewal as a continuation of political battles that had not caught the imagination of most Canadians; the question of patriation had been batted back and forth for more than a decade. But when the notion of an entrenched Charter was added to the mixture, it became volatile, and public participation in the debate became virtually irrepressible. I doubt that Canadians have ever given as much attention to questions about the nature of their liberties and the structure of their constitution as they did during the Charter debate. There is no doubt the Charter has fundamentally redefined Canadian political values and our expectations of public institutions. This process still continues. The Charter will be a continuing source of debate and discussion. It has defined our rights in abstract terms; it remains to give them content. While it will be the courts who ultimately rule upon application of the Charter, the courts will do so against the background of evolving public expectations and attitudes. In the process, Canadians may discover the limits of the language of rights, and confront in particular instances the problems and challenges that inevitably arise when rights come into conflict.

Consider, for another example, the history of the National Energy Policy (NEP). In Canadian politics, the potential sources of conflict over natural resources are numerous. There is a conflict between those in regions which own the resources, and those who see resources in a national context. There are sources of conflict pertaining to redistribution. For example, should resource users be contributing more when it is known that resources are important to a region, or should the resource development subsidize other, national goals? The NEP, even though it was conceived by many Canadians in the West as an attack on their interests, ultimately directed public attention to these questions. It forced Canadians to confront sometimes difficult issues, and in the process, I believe contributed to greater awareness of the legitimate aspirations of Canadians east and west.

Commentary:

The Wisdom of Party Resolutions

Roméo LeBlanc

We went through more crises in communications in the days when I was in the Cabinet than I can remember. But I remember one particular day when we were not doing very well in the poll, and the Prime Minister said, "They do not understand our message." To which Don Jamieson, with his usual clarity, said, "Prime Minister, they understand it very well. They do not like it!"

My view of political parties is that they are something like a river, fed by many springs and many rivulets carrying a lot of nutrients and a fair amount of garbage. But the fact is that you cannot have a river without meanderings, which is exploration . . . I have a bias in favour of the party, of the grassroots of the party. I want to say something about party resolutions.

Political parties are doing a lot of political education. Professor Lemieux was right when he said their job is to educate their own members. But what is education? Is it involvement?, putting up lawn signs?, talking with people?, chatting with your friends at the coffee break?, following events in newspapers?, agonizing with your party when it is in trouble? Is it all of that? If so, I saw a lot of political education in my local association in New Brunswick.

There is a lot of wisdom in party resolutions. I will read you a couple of them. I will use examples from my own province, because it is the one I know best. The fact is, political parties at the local level, at the provincial or regional level, get disrupted by leadership conventions; it is in the quiet periods that they produce their best

work, either soon after an election or when they go into opposition and nobody looks over their shoulder.

The stuff I am talking about does not make *The Journal*, or the headlines in the newspapers, but I find that very often through resolutions the party membership educate their MPs and their leaders.

New Brunswick, which was not a threatening province, was able to foster a number of important ideas at Liberal party national conventions. This one, for example.

> Whereas Canadians cannot allow the forces of the marketplace to reduce any of them to the status of migrants in their own country, and whereas the desire to live in one's own region should be the humane goal of a just society, BE IT RESOLVED that the economic power and the political will of the nation will be marshalled to give those who live in the poorer regions the full opportunities of their citizenship.

This is a very innocent-looking resolution, from the 1982 policy conference, adopted by the national convention. It did not come from me. It did not come from the MPs. It came from "ordinary" people who got together – I think there was one teacher in the group. I am not embarrassed by this resolution at all. Regional development as a policy, at one point, is going to have to challenge the market forces.

There are so many other good ones I could quote. This year, for example, there was a discussion at the national convention and this is what the New Brunswick group produced:

> BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party publicly confirm its commitment to the principle of the national government as trustee of the nation's resources, in particular endorse the maintenance and development of a vigorous public broadcasting system to serve and inform the public within the airwaves' resource and paramount to the use of airwaves for profit.

In other words, resources that belong to the people should be exploited for the benefit of the people, not for private gain. And this applies to airways, to fisheries, to Crown lands, to harbour fronts, to river fronts, etc.

This was an innocent-looking resolution. It got through. And I think the amount of education that the membership got out of the discussion of the issue in the drafting of that resolution was as valid and as important as a whole lot of classes on "civics."

On the extra billing issue, the Liberal caucus was very nervous. Nobody wants to tangle with a bunch of doctors! It is the party which twice, in national conventions, passed resolutions determining very clearly that under no circumstances should the Cabinet back down on the question of universal access to medicare. I will tell you this: Monique Bégin used those resolutions of the party very effectively on her colleagues.

That was my point. There is a lot of "educating" going on in a party. There is a lot of "educating" at party meetings. There is a lot of wisdom in the resolutions that are passed there.

Commentary:

Educating the Gladiators

Bill Knight

There is no escaping the fact that political parties in their use of communication, which affects political education, have to go to the fundamental instruments in the age in which they live.

Think of those political animals and how excited they were when somebody invented the printing press!

In the 1930s and 1940s on the Prairies, Aberhart, Douglas, Woodsworth, Knowles, carried tremendous political impact with their messages, albeit ideological messages of the left or the right, because they had understood the massive impact of radio. And Caouette did the same in Quebec. Therefore, the challenge of political education to political parties, to my mind, to a large extent, is to meet the challenge of the ever-changing means of communication.

How in the modern age does a political party get to its consumers? No matter how you add it up or subtract it, we are in the age of television.

We are in a battle to educate mainly our gladiators. Whether they are volunteers at the local level, or whether they are people who are looking at joining the party, it is a constant reaching out from an ideological base. I happen to think that is true of all the parties. No matter how we try and colour it up, no matter how objective we try to be, the truth is we need constant recruitment and involvement.

For example, we tried in the fall to do a communications system right across Canada called "Forum 2000." We brought in speakers who were not normally tied to the party. We set up broadcasts out of

Montreal and we beamed ourselves anywhere from Whitehorse to Vancouver, to Newfoundland, to Halifax and places in between. It proved to be incredibly successful. You have to understand that this is in a party that usually prefers to meet in church basements or union halls! So to spend $100,000 or more to do this modern satellite hook-up to try and involve thousands of Canadians in education, was for us almost an experiment in political terror, as to whether we were going to pull it off. We did. And we learned a lot.

We learned that there was incredible interest. We learned that the public, as usual, was far ahead of the politicians, of political parties and of educators, and could help set these systems and make them work in places we never heard of.

We do a lot of other things. We have foundations. We have the Douglas-Coldwell Foundation, we have the Bogue Foundation. We have conventions locally, provincially and federally. We help publish books. We still have newspapers like *The Commonwealth* in Saskatchewan; you have to pay to get it!, a typical NDP approach.

Because of our ideological base, we do try through task forces – we had task forces recently on tax reform, another on jobs – to reach out to the communities, sometimes successfully, sometimes with abysmal failure. But we do try, and political education is a consistent debate within the party.

Commentaire:

L'éducation politique et les partis au Québec

Réjean Pelletier

Je voudrais commenter un peu la situation des partis au Québec en ce qui a trait à l'éducation politique. Je pense que le Parti libéral du Québec a été un peu un innovateur en créant d'abord une structure politique où il pouvait rassembler des membres, en créant sa propre fédération libérale dans les années 50 et, un peu plus tard, dans les années 60, en séparant cette fédération libérale de l'aile fédérale. Il y avait dès lors une véritable organisation propre au parti provincial qui permettait aux membres de se rassembler sur une base commune et de discuter ensemble d'un certain nombre de politiques. C'est à la base de toute éducation politique des membres que d'avoir une organisation qui permet un tel rassemblement.

Le Parti québécois, par la suite, a peut-être poussé cela encore plus loin. Lorsqu'on a fondé le Parti québécois, on a créé une double structure, une structure politique et une structure électorale. La structure électorale était celle qu'on connaissait à peu près dans tous les partis, c'est-à-dire une organisation, un système de financement et un cadre publicitaire. Ici, il n'y avait pas vraiment d'innovation. C'est plutôt au niveau de la fonction politique qu'il y avait une certaine forme d'innovation, fonction politique qui se divisait elle-même en trois sous-sections: l'une pour la mise en place d'un programme politique, l'autre pour l'animation et la troisième pour ce qu'on pourrait appeler la documentation.

L'aspect programme a très bien fonctionné à l'intérieur du parti. Cela a été le grand exercice des militants que de discuter

constamment du programme, du niveau local au niveau national en passant par le niveau régional. Cela a été le grand exercice de participation des militants à la vie du parti.

L'aspect animation a été beaucoup moins réussi. On a essayé de mettre sur pied des cours sur le système politique québécois, des cours sur les institutions politiques. Cela était animé par Jean Méneau au départ et ensuite par Robert Boily, qui étaient des professeurs de sciences politiques. Cette expérience n'a pas duré très longtemps. Ensuite, on a essayé la formule des colloques. Il y a eu des colloques sur l'agriculture, sur le système monétaire et et sur d'autres sujets. Cette autre expérience a duré quelques années puis a aussi été abandonnée.

L'aspect documentation, par lequel on voulait essayer de faire connaître la pensée du parti par le biais de brochures et de volumes, a été assez efficace au tout début de l'histoire du parti, mais a été récupéré assez rapidement par l'aile parlementaire, surtout par le biais du bureau de recherche qui avait été établi pour l'aile parlementaire.

On a donc bien réussi au niveau du programme, mais les deux autres fonctions, animation et documentation, sont tombées avec le temps, en particulier lorsque le parti est arrivé au pouvoir. C'est toujours le grand problème des partis lorsqu'ils arrivent au pouvoir. À ce moment-là, la fonction politique s'est étiolée encore davantage.

Voilà donc un type d'expérience d'éducation politique des militants par un parti. Ce fut un grand pas en avant. Au lieu de mettre en branle, au moment des élections, un processus d'éducation politique de quelques centaines d'organisateurs, on essaya de mobiliser, même entre les élections, plusieurs milliers de militants.

Commentary:

The Task for Political Parties

Tom Kent

The purpose of political parties is to gain or to maintain government office. They are interested in political education only if, and to the extent that, they see it as serving their purpose. We should not waste time asking them to change their natures. If we object to their miserable performance in political education, it must be on the grounds that they thereby fail to serve their own interest in gaining and maintaining office.

In politics, ideas are difficult to get established and, once established, hard to get rid of even decades after they have become irrelevant. It was once true to regard the Liberal Party of Canada as about the most successful political organization in the democratic world. I, among others, said that in 1953, when the St. Laurent government won the election that meant 22 years of continuous Liberal rule. But 1953 is a long time ago. We don't seem to have got our minds round the fact that since then no Canadian party has won even two successive majorities.

Therefore, let us not be impressed by contemporary political parties and their massive apparatus of alleged experts and patronage appointees. Even in their own terms, they are incompetent. Even though in office they spend billions of dollars of the public's money trying to influence the public opinion polls, they can't sustain public confidence for two elections in a row, even in the limited sense in which some 40 per cent of the popular vote is enough for a parliamentary majority.

What has this got to do with political education? Quite a lot, I think. We can't ask political parties to be interested in educating the public at large. On the contrary, they want to un-educate the marginal voter. In office, they want him or her to believe that all is as good as it can be. In opposition, they want him or her to believe that life would be significantly better if only the present rascals were thrown out. In both cases, education it is not.

I think that the weakness of the parties can fairly be attributed to their failure in the political education that is in their own interests: the education of their own members, of their supporters and organizers and candidates. The focus for such education, of course, must be the discussion of party policy, of what a government created by the party should do, or would do, in office. I am prejudiced, no doubt, in claiming that such discussion was at the heart of the Pearson Liberal party from 1958 to 1965. It was why the Pearson government came to office with a fairly coherent idea of what to do, and did it. True, the Pearson Liberals did not enjoy great electoral success, primarily because of Pearson's weaknesses in Parliament and the TV studio and on the platform. But at least they held their support constant from one election to the next.

Today the style, of the two old parties at least, is very different. They are good at the easy work of bashing opponents. They are lavish in public relations techniques and apparently know a lot about making appointments and business deals to their benefit. What they don't know is how to run the country. They do not come to office with thought-out practicable policies in matters of concern to the voters they have hoodwinked, but whose tolerance of them is rapidly diminishing.

Forty years ago, weaknesses in party policies did not matter so much. If the politicians were short of ideas, there was a small, highly creative bureaucracy to help them out. No one looking at today's swollen Ottawa can suspect it of any such capacity. A Cabinet that starts without a collective commitment to some coherent policies is highly unlikely ever to get its head above water. It will only track the public opinion polls as it struggles from crisis to crisis, from expedient to desperate expedient.

I offer only one prediction. If we are ever again able to talk about a successful political organization in Canada, a party capable of winning a majority for two terms or more, it will be the party that first takes seriously the task of political education where that is vital to its own interests – that is, within its own ranks. If the political parties fail to recognise their own interests, if they fail to return to being the vehicles of public policy, an increasingly policy-conscious public will continue to shift its involvements more and more to the organizations where the ideas and action are – to the pressure groups and special

interest causes. That way lies confusion for us all and an even more unpleasant life for politicians.

III
Issues in Political Education

Chapter 16:

Political Education: In Whose Interest?

John C. Evans

Economists generally assume that in making choices, individuals act rationally and are primarily motivated by their own self-interest. A group of economists, called public choice theorists, has applied these assumptions and the methodology of economics to a broad spectrum of political and bureaucratic decisions. An application of this framework to the problem of political education requires an examination of the extent to which political education is in the self-interest of each individual, or group, participating in the political process. Such an approach reveals that the pursuit of more political education may not be advantageous to individuals or groups. Indeed, some may have an incentive to limit the amount of political education that is made available.

One possible difficulty with political education is its "public good" nature. The benefits from improving political education may not be appropriable by any single individual or group in an amount sufficient to offset the costs that would have to be incurred to achieve the improvement. In other words, if one individual invests time and resources in acquiring more political education, then not only does that individual benefit, but others benefit as well. Provision of the benefit to others yields no direct return to the individual incurring the cost. Unless a group is a political party, its shares of the gains is likely to be so small that it is not rational to invest in political education. Hence, each individual or group may perceive a shortage of political education, yet have little incentive to alleviate it. Under these

circumstances political education, when it does occur, may often be a by-product resulting from the pursuit of some other objective.

This paper presents a public choice approach because it helps to reveal how difficult it is likely to be to increase the amount of political education that individuals demand or that specific groups supply. A possible conclusion is that the current level of political education is in some sense optimal, or at least inevitable. However, such a conclusion is heavily dependent on the underlying assumptions of public choice theory, which will be outlined as the discussion proceeds. Some reservations about the universal applicability of the assumptions will be raised in the concluding section.

The key groups in the public choice framework to be used here are voters, lobby groups, politicians, bureaucrats, and the media (Hartle, 1985; Mueller, 1983). Each group is expected to know what is in its own best interest and to act rationally in order to achieve it. In practical terms this means that individuals and groups will weigh the costs and benefits of any particular action, and make trade-offs such that ideally the marginal benefit would equal the marginal cost. The following sections examine the motivations and interests of each group in turn.

Voters

Each individual is assumed to maximize his/her comprehensive net worth, which is equal to the difference between present and future perceived assets, rights, and entitlements, on the one hand, and liabilities and obligations, on the other, subject to limited resources, information, and time. There are two types of rational political activity for the voter. The first is informed voting. An individual will generally not have the time and resources required to be fully informed and to participate in decisions that affect all aspects of his/her comprehensive net worth. Given the information and decision costs, an individual will likely focus his/her efforts on those issues that are perceived to be the major determinants of comprehensive net worth.

A corollary to informed voting is rational ignorance. If the expected return on an investment in learning about a particular issue does not exceed the cost of finding out, then that issue will be overlooked. In this case, voting decisions will be based largely on voter perceptions of the issues. "Voter perceptions . . . are the reality of public policy decision making." (Hartle, 1985:31)

A further corollary is that voting itself may be irrational. A rational individual would vote only if the expected benefit of voting, namely the subjective probability that his/her vote would affect the election result times the expected increase in comprehensive net

worth from a favourable election outcome, were sufficiently high to offset the cost of voting. Since it is highly unlikely that each voter believes his/her vote will determine the election outcome, low voter turnout would not be surprising. Yet, a sizeable proportion of the eligible population usually votes. Thus, contrary to the public choice assumption, individuals may behave irrationally by voting. That voters may behave irrationally in other ways is obviously a possibility that the public choice approach overlooks.

Voting studies in Canada reveal little evidence that issues, even "pocketbook" issues like inflation, play a pivotal role in determining election outcomes (Pammett, LeDuc, Jenson, and Clarke, 1977). There is evidence of a strong relationship between interest in politics, political participation, and orientation to issues. However, for most this relationship was not sufficient to offset partisanship (Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc, and Pammett, 1979, Chapter 8). In addition, it is not clear whether the causation runs from issue orientation to interest in politics or vice versa.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis that emerges from this analysis is that voters will invest in the amount and quality of political education that they consider necessary and desirable for their own purposes. They might benefit from having more or better political education, but they have no incentive to obtain it on their own initiative.

Lobby Groups

Lobby groups are likely to arise when the average value of an issue, or set of issues, is sufficient to offset the so-called transaction costs of communicating, meeting, and deciding, as well as the out-of-pocket costs of hiring researchers, staff, and professional lobbyists. The transaction costs will generally be greater as the size of the group and the geographic distance between members increases. To be successful, the group must be able to solve the free-rider problem (i.e., be able to limit the number of people who are likely to benefit without joining the group and sharing in the costs). The marginal costs of lobbying tend to be lower if the fixed costs of setting up the group have to be incurred in any case, as, for example, happens with professional societies like the medical and legal associations. Most business and trade associations exist to provide information to their membership and to lobby on their behalf.

Most voters belong to so-called "latent" groups, which are not active unless a specific action is perceived to threaten their comprehensive net worth. A good example would be the "gray-panther" groups that sprang into action when the Mulroney government attempted to de-index old-age benefits. However, there are also broad-based lobby groups like the National Citizens Coalition that

operate primarily on the basis of the strongly-held views of their membership and despite free-rider problems.

Lobby groups have an incentive to improve their knowledge of the political process in order to promote legislation and/or to win exemptions that would benefit their members. Since the success of their activities may be injurious to others (e.g., other taxpayers or consumers), lobby groups generally have little incentive to improve the political education of the average voter. Sometimes, however, rival lobby groups may take their respective cases to the public in an appeal for broader support. On these occasions the public may gain greater insight into the issues at stake, but the improvement in political education is more a by-product than a direct objective of lobbying.

Politicians

The primary objective of the politician is to get elected, and to stay elected, preferably for a party in power. Party names are labels that signify a bundle of likely policy choices. Party leaders and candidates are chosen by the membership to increase its chances of electoral success, although the interests of the general party membership may differ from those of the party's elected caucus. Politicians will endeavour to appeal to uncommitted voters by offering them net benefits at the expense of committed opponents, or by spreading the costs so widely that they will be overlooked by rational voters (i.e., so that the costs to any individual or group are small compared to the organizational costs required to oppose the action). Voters' perceptions of present and future rights and obligations need not be correct to affect voter choice; politicians can generate inconsistent perceptions among voters on account of their ignorance and biases. "Thus, the promised shares of the pie are not necessarily constrained by the real size of the pie" (Hartle, 1985: 28).

In the United States, it is not uncommon for private interests through Political Action Committees to pay politicians for beneficial legislation through campaign contributions and other forms of recompense. Politicians in this conception are seen as basically upright, but weak and corruptible. More recently, however, it has been recognized that politicians can profit by threatening taxes, regulatory measures, and other forms of punitive legislation that they will remove for a price. For example, "(t)he California legislature is notorious for politicians' use of 'milker bills' and 'juice bills' introduced solely to milk or squeeze payments from those who would be harmed." (McChesney, 1987). Thus, not only legislation, but also the repeal of legislation, may be for sale.

It can be argued that politicians stand to gain little from an improved political education on the part of voters, because voters might then begin to realize the amount of income they are losing as a result of politically-efficient decisions, and/or to understand how politicians can manipulate legislation in order to make their re-election more likely. According to this view, it is in a politician's interest to be vague about the reasons for decisions, ambiguous about the political process, and to talk in generalities. In turn, this may be what rationally ignorant individual voters want because they plan to vote mainly on the basis of perceptions.

Bureaucrats

In theory, bureaucrats are supposed to serve their political masters in the best interests of the public. However, in a public choice context, bureaucrats are viewed as pursuing mainly their own interests. To understand these interests, it is first necessary to understand why their jobs were created. Each government department should be seen as serving a constituency consisting of informed voters and lobby groups who place a high value on the activities of that department. A department administers policies and programs decided on by the politicians, and to some extent communicates constituency wants to the politicians and political reactions to the constituency.

Some authors (e.g., Breton, 1974, Chapter 9) have defined a bureaucrat's utility function as having only one variable, namely the relative size of the bureau measured in terms of either employees or budget relative to other departments. Given the objective of maximizing these two things, a bureaucrat will espouse any measure that will increase his/her bureau's size, influence and power.

Bureaucrats seeking appointment to an office of greater power and influence must be able to function well with politicians, other bureaucrats, and to some extent members of the constituency. They must also demonstrate an understanding of the issues facing the department and an ability to deal competently with them. To this end a bureaucrat will often employ researchers or consultants, whose output can be shown to both politicians and other bureaucrats either to provide evidence that (a) the bureaucrat knows what he/she is talking about, and (b) the department is on top of the problem, or to rally public opinion in favour of a particular policy option that the bureaucrat or the political masters favour.

Bureaucrats also realize that knowledge is power. Detailed information about a particular issue provides a bureaucrat with an advantage over the politician. Political information is the currency that bureaucrats can spend to reward or placate other bureaucrats and lobby groups. Hence, to share knowledge via improved political

education could result in a loss of bureaucratic power. (See Qualter, this volume, Ch. 19). In addition, bureaucrats are limited in their ability to release information by a variety of public service and administrative acts. Access-to-information legislation is an attempt to ease some of these restrictions, but bureaucrats can soon become adept at limiting the effectiveness of such incursions if they want to conceal information. When a bureaucrat, as an act of conscience, releases confidential information that is politically damaging, political education may be improved, but only at the risk of the bureaucrat's career. (Taber, 1987)

In a representative democracy it is highly unlikely that there would ever be a government department established to promote political education. The reasons are that there is simply no direct constituency for its services and bureaucrats would likely view it as a potential threat.

The Media

Voter perceptions are greatly affected by news coverage and its interpretation by the mass media. Those items that receive coverage and prominence have an implicit importance assigned to them. However, according to public choice theory, news items are selected to maximize profit. The basis of determining whether a story is covered is the size of the potential audience and the intensity of its attraction to a news item, since these factors are major determinants of advertising and sales revenue.

> Readers and viewers most want to know about those events that are perceived to be likely to affect their interests directly, especially where there may be an opportunity to take some action that will further or protect or enhance those interests. (Hartle, 1985: 32)

Reader/viewer interest is limited by two factors, namely: (a) rational ignorance – hence, the more complex the appearance of an issue, the less its appeal to the media; and (b) cognitive dissonance – since people do not like to have their views challenged, they are attracted by familiar themes.

By giving prominence to issues that at least superficially can be understood, that affect the interests of many individuals, and that are consistent with their prior beliefs (and prejudices), the mass media can determine the agenda for the public policy debate. Politicians can use this to their advantage. Governments can reward uncommitted voters at the expense of committed voters by public announcements of the direct benefits of a policy that appear in specialized publications

and that are understood by the winners, and [illegible] down playing and spreading the indirect costs across a wider audience. In this way winners are likely to invest in knowing about the benefits, while losers will find it not worth their while to become informed and to organize any effective opposition.

In the public choice framework the media will promote political education only to the extent that it serves the self-interest of the corporation. Thus, public affairs writing and programming has as its primary purpose not political education, but profit.

Optimality of Political Education

Although everyone benefits from improved political education, from having not only a better informed electorate but also a stronger political culture and better defined political values, the public choice approach to the problem suggests that the key participants in the political process have few individual incentives either to demand or to supply more of this commodity. Can we conclude, therefore, that the amount currently available is somehow optimal?

One of the theorems that emerges from the public choice literature is the median voter rule. This rule states that when decisions are based on majority voting, the equilibrium level of expenditures on public goods is the level that is more preferred by the median voter.

> The median voter is the one for whom the number of individuals who prefer a higher level of expenditure (the number of individuals who have a higher income) is exactly equal to the number of individuals who prefer a lower level of expenditure (the number of individuals who have a lower income). (Stiglitz, 1986: 133)

Furthermore, in a two-party system both parties have an incentive to appeal to the median voter in an effort to maximize the number of votes received. In this framework, whether there is too little or too much being spent on public goods depends on whether the median individual's share of total costs is greater than or less than his/her share of total benefits.

To illustrate, let us assume that the amount of public goods and services demanded depends on an individual's income and on the tax price he/she is required to pay. The median voter is the individual with the median income. First, consider an example where all individuals (N in total) earn an identical income and where income tax is imposed at a uniform proportionate rate. Because incomes are identical, the median voter earns an average income. The median

individual's private benefits are thus 1/N of total benefits, and his/her costs are 1/N of total costs. Since the median voter's marginal benefit equals his/her marginal cost, an economist would deem the level of public goods expenditure determined by majority voting to be efficient, and in this sense optimal.

Next, consider an example where all individuals obtain the same marginal benefit equal to 1/N of total benefits. However, in this case the distribution of income is assumed to be skewed such that the average income is substantially above the median income (i.e., the income of the median voter). Assuming proportional taxation, the tax price paid by the median voter is going to be lower than in the first example, i.e., less than 1/N of total cost, and the median voter would demand a higher level of public goods expenditure than in the first example. Since the previous amount was considered optimal, the level of public goods expenditure determined by majority voting in this second example would be deemed excessive.

If political education neatly corresponded to the above description of a public good, then public choice theory might enable us to draw a conclusion about whether there is currently too much or too little political education. Unfortunately, the issue is more complicated. For example, political education likely generates larger benefits for the wealthy than for the poor, and Canada has progressive, not proportional, taxation. With majority voting the former effect would tend to create an undersupply of political education whereas the latter effect would lead to an oversupply, and it is difficult to know which effect dominates.

Within a public choice context, therefore, any statement regarding the need to improve political education must be viewed largely as an ethical statement. It essentially takes the form of preaching to a possibly disinterested public audience. Similarly, public choice theorists are not impressed by arguments to the effect that individuals do not know what is in their best interests and would oppose attempts to give any institution a mandate to protect Canadian culture or to provide political education.

Conclusion

One advantage of the public choice approach is that it forces one to examine problems like political education from the perspective of each individual's, or group's, self-interest. This analysis revealed that individuals have little incentive to increase either the demand or supply of political education even though an increase might benefit Canadians in general. We next explored whether the current availability of political education could be considered optimal. It proved difficult to make any determination on formal grounds, yet

given the earlier arguments, it is tempting to conclude that the current provision of political education, if not optimal, is inevitable.

This conclusion depends heavily on the public choice assumptions that political participants pursue only their self-interest and that they behave rationally. Although there is some empirical literature that is supportive of the predictions from public choice models (e.g., Frey, 1984), political scientists, among others, are quick to point out political phenomena that at least on the surface are contrary to public choice theory. For example, voting studies can find little evidence that "pocketbook" issues affect election outcomes. (Clarke, et al., 1979)

Part of the problem with the public choice model is that it views the individual voter, politician or bureaucrat as an atomistic decision-maker pursuing self-interest without much regard to those with whom he/she interacts on a daily basis. This view overlooks the influence of indirect social values like party affiliation and professional ethics, and denies the possibility that cooperating individuals may voluntarily pursue objectives of joint interest. Thus, contrary to the assumptions of public choice theory, people act from a plurality of motives, some of which are related to a conception of the public good, and not just for their own personal benefit.

If enough people are motivated by concern for the overall health of the state, then they may support improvements in political education, e.g., improved news and public affairs programs, better school curricula, and the operations of public interest lobby groups. Furthermore, there are media producers and publishers who are successfully experimenting and/or gambling on the public's appetite for news and public affairs. Whether they pursue these ends for private or public gain, political education is being improved, even if only as a by-product.

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Chapter 17:

Technology and Political Education: The Eclipse of Judgment

Peter C. Emberley

"Technique is ourselves". By these provocative words Jacques Ellul challenged his readers to confront their contemporary self-interpretation by recognizing the extent to which modern man orients himself almost exclusively through the categories of technological consciousness. (Ellul, 1964) He suggested that the ensemble of techniques in the West had evolved to an all-absorbing mode of consciousness that seeks "efficiency" in every sphere of human life. Ellul denied that alternative conceptions of human good, of justice, and of reverence could limit or moderate the desire to master all contingency and subjectivity in the drive for a totally efficient order. The language we use, the categories through which we reason, the acts we publically permit, and the sciences we deem relevant, Ellul revealed, all attest to the primacy of the technological imperative in social, political, economic, and moral practice. Contemporary man was inherently technological. But the outcome was a truncation of experience, an abolition of difference, and a loss of the critical moral and political principles by which technological growth could be guided and judged.

One who has thought through the implications of Ellul's challenge is George Grant. Grant has elaborated the reasons why contemporary man is impotent to know what compass points and limits he might properly recognize in the use of his extraordinary making and unmaking capacities. He has written hauntingly of the coming "twilight of justice" in which the self-evidence of important

principles of our political and moral legacy would evaporate. Taking measure of the vast network of experts, their agents, apparatuses, organizational methods, and institutional procedures that constitute our technological ensemble, he has reflected on the strange paradox that the modern enlightenment has permitted new and alarming methods of control and domination. Inspired by Ellul's inquiry, he states that,

> The practical question is whether a society in which technology must be oriented by cybernetics can maintain the institutions of free politics and the protection by law of the rights of the individual. (Grant, 1974:10)

In a practical way Grant is asking what the chances are of preserving the free individual in a technological society.

I agree with Grant's warnings and suggest that a serious tension is emerging between the technological imperative and the education required to sustain our existing political and moral practices. Educators, for the most part, embrace and advance the cause of technology. Too often they fail to remember human limitations, and in celebrating man's infinite and indefinite possibility, their projects are, in the final analysis, "nihilistic". By this I mean that the creators cannot give a rational account of their doings beyond willful assertion that they are right. And the techniques and methods they advance dissolve the distinctions, boundaries, center and margins of what once had worldly durability. Since it is our political legacy that is at risk, I suggest that we recall the basic difference in the political understanding of Aristotle and Plato. A brief outline of their distinct positions illustrates the choice we face in political education.

Aristotle: Political Prudence

The *polis*, Aristotle writes, has place for neither beast nor god. Men live in cities because unlike beasts and gods they are not complete; and, unlike beasts and gods, men who are mortal and know it, seek immortality, meaning, and the satisfaction which always remains separate from them. For this reason men act, speak, and remember; were he beast or god, man would engage in none of these. Gods, Aristotle conjectured, contemplate the eternal and unchanging things, remaining complete, immortal in their divine wisdom. Beasts, Aristotle observed, do not need to speak or act. They inhabit an infinite present, until they die. Only man remembers the tension between birth and death; the ambiguities and ambivalences of his life are his nature. His actions and speeches are his always incomplete, hence unsuccessful and therefore tragic, efforts to overcome this

tension. As an embodied being, he shares the fate of beasts; as a self-interpreting being, he seeks the wisdom he believes the gods to possess.

Under these conditions, human existence is marked by contingency and relativity, uncertainty and risk. No technique is sufficient to overcome these. Man must develop a unique understanding within his particular situation. Aristotle distinguishes *phronesis* from *poesis* and *techne*, marking out a sphere of deliberation which is not a form of production nor a technical skill which can be taught through procedural rules. Production and techniques always imply some violence – raw stuff is transformed into an ideal. *Phronesis*, or practical wisdom, on the other hand, orients itself in the world of ambiguity and incommensurability without resolving these into unity or certainty.

Since it does not have the exactitude or necessity of mathematics, different pedagogical skills or habituation and persuasion are required to engender *phronesis*. The capacity for prudence requires imagination, historical example, and impartiality, all of which distinguish it from technique's demand for methodic procedures, necessary deductive inferences, and objectivity. Practical wisdom permits a type of judging that is not merely subsuming particulars to universals; rather, it situates itself among the particulars, taking its bearing from them. The particulars are identified, not through *a priori* universals, but by determining their meaning in a story. The narrative context of the world, through which we ask the question of meaning and acquire our self-interpretation, is manifest in the virtues of historical sensibility and cultural appropriateness.

Identifying "appropriateness", and judging within a situation, are not ways of seeing arising from formal-logical operations done in solitary. Nor can they be engendered through an hypothesized "ideal society" that serves as a regulative ideal for us. Such "intellectualisation of the idea of the sense of the community" (Gadamer) renders politics into production, with all the attendant violence and intolerance for heterogeneity. As opposed to the universal truths conjectured by a disembodied mind, contextual perception is a "judging-with" of what is "fit" in which,

> we place ourselves in the concrete situation in which the other person has to act. The question here, then, is not of a general kind of knowledge, but of its specification at a particular moment. (Gadamer, 1985:288)

Counsels of prudence advise rather than compel. To hope for necessary truths, Aristotle notes, is a reflection of an excessive desire

for unity and certainty. Practical judgment tolerates the plurality of political speech.

Only a standpoint of the eternal would allow total clarity and mathematically certain knowledge. Were contingency to be mastered – if all particularity and subjectivity were transcended – a simulacrum of eternity would be realized, and a rule-governed wisdom would have been actualized. But such a life would appear like that of either beast or god. Man, as neither, orients himself by practical sense and by judgments which are situational and historical in a realm of alternation, probability, and plausibility. It is precisely by virtue of this contingency and ambivalence, error and relativity, that our distinctly human capacities emerge. This is why we engage in speech and action, exhibit remembrance and laughter, and display courage and loyalty. We are the being that blushes, that forgives, and that makes promises. We ask questions about meaning because there are events which are unique and different. We must exercise prudence because we are embodied individuals situated in locations which limit our vision. Aristotle's teaching aims to make us at home with the human condition. Of the various spheres in which human activity flourishes, only the *polis*, to him – as the public space in which we appear before others – respects man's plurality and tragic existence. It offers stability and durability against the individual's perishability, a common reality as a measure for private, subjective thoughts, the possibilities of civic friendship (and the virtues of fidelity and courage), and a public memorial by which individual histories, cutting across the natural and biological cycles of an indifferent life-process, might be remembered. (Arendt, 1958:175ff) Politics is the art of the possible which does not lend itself to a calculated resolution of man's ambiguous nature and limits. Politics needs the exercise of prudence and prudence has need of chance.

Nature's incertitude means that language can never be stripped of its metaphors, and an education of common-sense must recognize the primacy of image to concept, actions to ideas, poetry to prose, and persuasion to reason. There is a need for an education in concrete facts, historical examples, and cultural imagination, for with any other, the virtues needed for political speech and judgment will atrophy and the distinctive mode of *political* existence – which respects plurality and facilitates new beginnings – will be replaced by an administration of necessary rules.

Plato: The Technological Order as Philosophical Legacy

A very different account was offered by Aristotle's teacher, Plato. In the dialogues he composed, Plato has Socrates ask craftsman, poets,

and politicians the demanding question "What is. . .?" Socrates wanted an accounting of their skills and understandings, and their speeches through which these multiple practices were conceptually represented. A responsible, moral, and rational employment was one in which the craftsman, poet, or politician might fabricate a model in which his practice could be grasped as an element within a whole. The model was, moreover, to be structured so that speeches and actions were ordered to maximize the good. Each could be calculated as a means to a further end and the whole was consistent, intelligible, and homogeneous. To give a *logos* of one's speeches and actions was thus to answer the question "What is that good for?" The model through which the answer was given ensured that everything would be rendered clear, simple, and certain. By this reckoning, truth was a sort of security and possession. Truth was compelling because it was necessary, a grasp of what was the same and unchanging. Difference or heterogeneity, by contrast, marked the failure of reason.

Much later in the seventeenth century, Descartes radicalized the Platonic project of a search for certainty into an immanent program on behalf of longevity, health, and equality. After Descartes, the model has been described with various terms—"paradigm", "scenario", "Weltanschaung". Clarity, simplicity, and certainty are advanced through mathematical operationalism and technological experimentation. And conceptual representation entails control and subjugation. In each case, a project aimed at absorbing difference, at rendering the disparate and occasional into functional equivalence, and optimalizing performance has been attempted. This project seeking mastery of human and non-human nature, as well as the contingencies of history, has come with the many good things of life, but as knowledge and control began to work in tandem, it also has advanced an impotence in the capacity to make independent judgments pertaining to those things which are good.

Indeed, the modern version of the project which started with Plato sought and found alternatives to judgment. This is exemplified by the familiar project of avoiding the subjective, becoming more objective, and substituting technical solutions to problems previously requiring judgment. Technology has thus become automatic, self-augmenting, monistic, universal, and autonomous. (Ellul, 1964) It has usurped all different grounds which might question its legitimacy. Resistance can be converted into positive affirmation and celebration of technological efficiency. This has occurred because technology absorbs differences into its rhythmic processes, taking what is discrete and unconditional and transmitting its own cycles of innovation and devastation. When even the human is taken up and objectified, no pockets of resistance to technological efficiency remain.

Technology aims at dispersing those things which are a catalyst for collective memory and different forms of judgment.

In the last twenty years, for example, there has been a recurrent project of teaching "values" in the schools. "Values" are understood as those perspectives through which we order facts. Abjuring the ways of life and understandings apparently transmitted through the "hidden curriculum", this is an effort to make values explicit and in line with the demands of contemporary life. Whatever else could be said about values education, one feature recurs: the world given as an interrelated and meaning-pregnant plurality has to be reconstructed to conform to a yet-to-be model of social community with clear and certain objectives. The sole measure of moral adequacy advanced by the more credible of these programs is a reasoning of a methodic-procedural type. The model is inherently technological: what is demanded is a resolution of experience into its most discrete elements and a formalized reconstruction into a perfectly controlled phenomenon. Here knowing and making work together, realizing the goal of knowledge and production in the end of an ideal object. What is occurring is the transmutation of worldly orientations and understandings into technological objectives and imperatives. The human subject is being constituted to manipulate and control the objects which confirm his subjectivity.

The final "Platonization" of ways of life, skills, and understandings, then, is their rendering into "values", at once the objects of technological knowledge and power. Having "values" is the final symptom of "nihilism", a condition in which nothing has any standing order, in which whatever was once prescriptive or actual is dispersed and rendered indeterminate. It is a question, though, whether when we turn our interests and attention to things into explicit objects of comprehension and control, whether they continue to move us, or whether

> they no longer organize a field of significant possibilities in terms of which we act but become just one more possibility we can choose or reject. (Dreyfuss, 1979:339)

The destiny of the language of values is to reproduce the nihilistic will-to-power of technology; as George Grant notes, when "values" run afoul of technological growth, they will be sacrificed to and processed within the conveniences of the functional cycle. With values education, human subjectivity itself is taken up as an object of experimentation and control, abstracted, reduced, and processed as endless bits of manipulable data.

> A technological vision of men or women as an object means that we can apply our 'improvements' to them as objects with increasing efficiency. (Grant, 1986:119)

Contrary to the Enlightenment enthusiasm which continues to sustain our technology to what some have called the new "information order" is a *refinement* of the economy of the efficiency-imperative. It is accompanied by new behaviour technologies and new techniques of population adjustment and what appears as a slackening – because relations of authority, hierarchy, and tradition are being abandoned – is not the abolition of power, but rather a more subtle and economic deployment of it. The values-trade, for example, is one which has advanced the economy of efficiency by making it possible to invest desire with the technological imperative.

We are left in a situation of great danger. The conjunction of a relentless technological drive to absorb difference into the sameness of functionality and an inherently nihilistic discourse of "values", which now operates quite unabashedly as a technology of experimental subjugation and population control, is finally

> the price which modern man had to pay. . .for attempting to be absolute sovereign, to become the master and owner of nature, to conquer chance. (Grant, 1969:46)

Those expectations manifest themselves in the use of ideologies as substitute religions, and are creating a state that has all the equilibrium of an eternal death. In the vast absorption and processing of difference, in the rendering of everything as stylistic variation of the same (when everything becomes "data" or "information"), what has been achieved is finally a rhythmic repetition that is a simulacrum of eternity.

Marshall McLuhan is one who has written enthusiastically of the new mythic tribalism of the "information age", seeing optimistically the dissolution of boundaries and separations, fixed points of view, and sequential causality. In a world of circuits and integral patterns, of total environments and fused interdependencies, the space between individuals is overcome in "organic plenitude". A memory that is ordered by a world where material objects are stored and moved in space and time, will be out of place in the instant synchronization of information-bits that require the extension of consciousness to "total field awareness" and recollection to be replaced by "affective memory". The globe as a dynamic resonanting field, McLuhan writes, means an end to the autonomy and hubris of individuals and nation-states and the beginning of a re-mythologized and re-enchanted existence. "Electric circuitry is Orientalizing the

Western legacy. The contained, the distinct, the separate—our Western legacy—are being replaced by the flowing, the unified, the fused". (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967:94-95)

But when different options are foreclosed, and tension and ambiguity are overcome, the gradual elimination of individual, moral responsibility engenders an existence free of the features which make it specifically human. Judgment is then necessarily eclipsed because we need no longer inhabit a world where bodies, the relations of power in which those bodies are constituted, and the speeches through which individual psyches appear, introduce error and relativity. Without chance, there is nothing new and redemptive. Without new beginnings, there is no hope for future possibility. In the non-time of technological efficiency, there can be no promises and no forgiveness, and without these the practice of moral limits and possibilities is also dissolved.

Political Education

I have formulated our options (for heuristic purposes) as the choice between Plato and Aristotle. The first led us through the relentless projects of mastering contingency and subjectivity by representational models and culminated in technological functionality and efficiency. The second remained manifest in the Roman civic tradition and still finds expression wherever there are teachers who cultivate an historical sensibility and practical wisdom, according man's situation, practices, skills, understandings and ways of life their due. Each project advances a specific mode of pedagogy, and no education is complete without a combination of both: the latter maintains the solidarity of a public community in an historical situation, while the former prevents the derailment of historical meaning into fantasy and madness. And, obviously we cannot do away with technology; our task is to know how to remain human with it. But the Aristotelian teaching today needs special commendation.

A strange black-mail currently operates in our public discourse in which we are forced to choose between subjective vs. objective, relative vs. absolute, private taste vs. rational method. Aristotle recognized an in-between world, in which one would judge with an understanding that orients itself not by the necessary, but by the probable and plausible; not by the true and what admits of proof, but what has meaning; not by heaven nor by earth, but by the human world. As we have seen, this was a situated world requiring tact and a sense of the appropriate, rhetorical eloquence and worldly prudence, aesthetic narration and the questioning of meaning—all skills and understandings irreducible to conceptual representation or formal, procedural rationality.

In our enthusiasm for universal method, for mastering the conditions of the unpredictable, and for subsuming difference to points on a continuum; and in the contempt for common-sense, for historical remembrance, and for worldly distinctions, we have absolved the individual of the need for judgment, for moral accountability, and for tolerance of ambiguity and contingency. Modern rationality has no place for a special seeing or "sense" of the appropriate. It abjures practical wisdom and its contextually conditioned expression, reducing these to "mere" proverbial intuition or shrewd hunches. In the effort to reach total clarity under the assumption of an essential homogeneity of experience, the contents and context of human life are reduced, abstracted, and privatized to "not-yet-mastered" behaviours. By judgment, we now mean only the skill of subsuming particulars to universals. By prudence, we mean only the calculation of self-interest. By common-sense, we mean only the formal-logical processes we are commonly capable of mastering. These are the reasoning processes of silent, private, isolated, worldless persons immersed in a technological field, which in its rational objectivity is indifferent to the individual, to the bonds of friendship he enjoys and the virtues appropriate to them. As a result, we face the loss of the specific human characteristics mentioned by Aristotle.

To this it must be added that the celebration of McLuhan's "re-tribalization", in which the Newtonian-Cartesian space and time co-ordinates are relinquished, raises the question whether the notion of having a legal personality and individual state protection under the law can remain self-evident. The interpretation of ourselves as co-opted within a field of electric tension, and empowered by efficient performance, does not tolerate what is discrete, exclusive, and unconditionally prescriptive. McLuhan, who sees much that is life-affirmating in the new globalism, also ends his enthusiastic portrait on an ominous note:

> Terror is the normal state of any oral society, for in it everything affects everything all the time. (McLuhan, 1962:174)

The "terror" of total flux and systematic instability, its accompanying agitation and mobilization of a mass society, and its production of "superfluous peoples" – the unborn, the aged, the mad, the unproductive – whose legal protections can be sacrificed to technological convenience, is prepared for by selfless men, whose intensity can be channelled into endless fictional mental "realities". Regardless of whether those fictions are composed of the most sophisticated, deductive inferences of formal logic, once a common world and its accompanying common sense are lost, nothing can

prevent fanciful reconstructions on the basis of any imagined ideal. Hannah Arendt has written a sobering account of how easily disposable "human rights" have been in the 20th century. Deprived of a "commons" and situational judgment, no emphatic affirmation of the abstract "rights of man" can prevent abuses of the sort that have occurred in this century. (Arendt, 1977) An "abstract" human being who exists nowhere, dispossessed of particular loyalties, distinctive qualities, and specific locality, may have abstract rights, but they are unenforceable and unprotectable.

The mode of understanding accompanying technology which renders events, individuals, and concrete experiences into fluid data, "energized" by the will to power within cycles of innovation and devastation, thereby denies their essential otherness, paralyzes the imagination and risks engendering a form of total domination in which men are transformed into bundles of reliable reactions.

> Total domination which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other. (Arendt, 1966:438)

To avoid these dangers, we are called to remember the political world. Political education is the practice of citizenship—a deep engagement with the historical horizon one inhabits and the cultivation of character appropriate to it. Education has the tasks of a) preserving the understanding that the world and not our dreams or fantasies is our home and b) cultivating the spontaneity and uniqueness of individuals that makes of that world a plurality:

> Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. (Arendt, 1977:196)

Without historical remembrance, durable things, the worldly distinctions regarding what is useful and beautiful, the possibility of unique and spontaneous action, and common-sense, and without the recognition of our concrete, embodied human condition, our current declarations of tolerance, good judgment, and rationality are nothing but immoderate abstractions. Our political education must emphasize these qualities, and not the endless substitutability and functionality

of technology or its accompanying "politics" of rule-administration and necessary procedure. What needs to be asked, in the light of our enormous capacities to make and unmake, is whether we can remember what it is that we are as humans. Politics itself, as the testimony we pay to human plurality and the nobility of public speech, must resume its place at the center of our teaching.

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Chapter 18:

Political Education and Democratic Participation

Jon H. Pammett

> People refuse to participate only where politics does not count—or counts less than rival forms of private activity. They are apathetic because they are powerless, not powerless because they are apathetic. There is no evidence to suggest that once empowered, a people will refuse to participate. (Barber, 1984:272)

Political education involves more than teaching and learning about politics. To be differentiated from indoctrination, political learning must be motivated by a genuine desire to learn. And the generation of such motives depends to a large extent on the opportunities for learning to be used, for public influence within the political system. So long as the goal of political education is the production of better-informed spectators to the processes of policy formation, ratification and evaluation, such opportunities to learn will fail to engage the interest of the public to any increased extent.

We in Canada operate our governmental institutions through a set of essentially similar brokerage political parties, centrist in ideology and determined to avoid alienating any important interest in society. (See Brodie, Chapter 14, this volume.) Such parties are most comfortable with public participation of two sorts. The first is a politics of organized interests, where these are put forward by groups representing the private benefits desired by their membership. Even when issues do not involve direct personal gain, organized interest

groups are often expected to represent the "sides" in an adversarial struggle, the result of which is defined as the public interest. The second type of public participation is the identification of problems affecting all in common, problems which the parties (implicitly or explicitly) agree to attack in hopes of an improved situation. The public can participate, particularly at election time, in the selection of one of those parties to address the situation on behalf of the community.

Critiques of representative democracy note its elitist or oligarchic nature. (Arendt, 1963; Pateman, 1970; Mansbridge, 1980; Barber, 1984) Our current institutions provide for the representation of private interests, but not for widespread direct public participation in determining the public interest. The combination of two assumptions, that the general public is primarily interested in personal benefit and that it is not informed about issues, reinforces the view that the appropriate political institutions are those relying on representatives, who *are* informed and who *are* interested in the general welfare. Lack of political education is taken as one reason for the necessary existence of representative government. Little attention is given to the possibility that the correct direction of causation in this relationship is the reverse, that the existence of representative government is one reason for the low level of political education in Canada.

For the individual citizen in a representative democracy, detailed political knowledge is of limited utility. To the extent that politics is assumed to be a struggle for advantage, participation becomes the taking part in that struggle in an effort to influence the distribution of resources. (Scaff, 1975) Required knowledge is limited to one's own desired benefits, and the course of action and policies necessary to bring about their maximization. And when issues of general welfare are discussed, public ignorance of details means a reliance on representatives who will in turn (with the experts in the bureaucracy) determine the correct policies. In this latter case, the acquisition of detailed knowledge is a waste of time, since no institutionalized mechanisms are present to tap it.

The institutional provisions within Canadian representative democracy for participation of the citizenry at large are of three sorts. The first is the mechanism of elections, in which representatives are chosen. Elections could represent significant opportunities for public choice among policy options, and an opportunity to select a particular set of representatives to implement them. The second is the referendum, in which important policy choices are put to the voters for advice or ratification. The third is what one might broadly call public consultation, a category encompassing such things as open public hearings, as well as the consultation of the public by Task Forces and

Royal Commissions. Examination of each of these mechanisms as a participative arena for the public at large leads to the conclusion that the existence of none of them is likely to motivate a large scale desire for more political education.

An extensive argument about the difficulties for *elections* to provide opportunities for policy mandates, or even meaningful discussion, has been presented elsewhere by the present author and colleagues. (Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc and Pammett, 1984) It can be demonstrated that issues are important in election campaigns and central to the voting decisions of a considerable number of Canadian voters. The problem lies with the fact that these issues are infrequently defined with a degree of precision that might approximate public policy, and additionally that voting patterns based on issues are frequently not in any concerted direction, leading to difficulties in trying to connect an issue mandate with any particular group of representatives.

> The very broad problems which strike many voters as important, and which the parties promise to attack if elected, are so diffuse as to defy any specific interpretation of a public judgment based upon them. The cost of living, the lack of growth, the need for jobs and the price of energy, have all been important election issues during the 1970s and 1980s, but in each case, no one party has been decisively linked by the electorate with any preferred solutions. When specific policies are proposed to deal with these general problems, the electorate often divides down the middle as to whether the idea is sound, again frustrating attempts to assign a mandate to the party which wins the election. As if recognizing this, parties are quite prepared to adopt the policies put forward by their rivals only a short time before, thus further complicating the question of electoral mandates. (Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc and Pammett, 1984:182)

In part, the strategic considerations dictated by elections mitigate against strong or specific stands by political parties in a brokerage political system. The distribution of public opinion on specific election issues is rarely dramatically skewed, and parties well recognize the higher potential for vote loss than vote gain on "position issues". Far better to emphasize "valence" issues on which everyone is agreed, and restrict the electoral discussion to which representative could best "do the job." No better illustration of this situation exists than the tendency for "leadership" to be treated as an important issue in Canadian elections. Even parties of the Left, which might be

expected to provide more diversity of policy options permitting public expressions of preference, are caught in Canada in an oft-cited strategic dilemma, which they have tended to resolve by moving to the centre of the political spectrum.

Referendums are the chief method used in representative democracies for putting issues directly to the people for judgment. On a nationwide basis, this technique is used frequently only in Switzerland, a country with a long history of direct government by citizen assembly. (Studer, 1981) A number of American states, California being the most publicized, have provisions for public initiative and referendum, though many initiatives approved by the voters have been ruled unconstitutional by the courts. Many other countries have used referendums periodically, usually for the approval of constitutional amendments. (Butler and Ranney, 1978) In Canada, the referendum was used on a nationwide basis for the validation of the 1942 decision to impose conscription, on a provincial level mostly on prohibition issues, and frequently on a municipal level for such matters as fluoridation of water, Sunday sports and entertainment, and local improvements. (Hahn, 1968; Adamson)

Most recently, we had the Quebec referendum of 1980, which is illustrative of its problems as a participative device. The independence issue was, as with many questions put to referendum, aggressively adversarial. Approval for a government policy direction was being sought, opposition was organized, battle lines were drawn, and a strident campaign was waged for the hearts and minds of the Quebec citizenry. Although attempts at public education were extensive during the referendum campaign in Quebec, the debate did not take place in an atmosphere of genuine public consultation and participation; it was rather an exercise in competitive manipulation by both sides. The result was widespread public confusion about the meaning of the alternatives encapsulated by electoral-type slogans of "sovereignty-association" and "renewed federalism". (Pinard and Fitzsimmons-LeCavalier, this volume, Chapter 4) Voting behaviour was dominated by basic feelings of national loyalty to either Canada or Quebec rather than structural reforms. (Pammett, Clarke, Jenson and LeDuc, 1983)

Public consultation is the third device used in representative democracies to allow participation on important issues. Typically, this takes the form of advisory councils, or public hearings on questions of policy. Such mechanisms are fundamentally group-based, in that organized interests are expected and encouraged to make submissions. Even so, resistance to public input appears to be high, as a study of environmental policy-making in the federal government noted:

Interviews with governmental officials, particularly on the federal level, which were undertaken for this study, suggest their general suspicion and dislike for greater public participation. This attitude can be divided into a number of component parts:

1. A belief that the government through the political process represents the public and that more direct public participation is a challenge to that political process;

2. A belief that politicians know what the public wants and do not require input on each decision;

3. A belief that public participation is cumbersome and time-consuming;

4. A desire not to expose the decision-making process to public scrutiny;

5. A belief that much of governmental decision-making requires merely technical advice and that the public is not qualified to provide such advice;

6. A fear that reforms for public participation will become platforms for radical 'unrepresentative' groups to spout their concerns, and will lead to conflict and noise. (Schatzow, 1977:151)

Occasionally, an extensive effort is mounted to investigate an important problem by way of a Task Force, Royal Commission or Inquiry. Recounting his experiences with these bodies, however, Robert Bryce wrote: "When I look back at the dozen or more important royal commissions with whose reports I had to deal as a public official, I doubt if really any of them were much influenced by citizen involvement, or indeed if they made much effort to seek it out." (Bryce, 1981:61) A number of exceptions to this judgment do exist. The Berger Inquiry is one dramatic example. In another, the Task Force on Canadian Unity held an extensive series of public hearings and meetings throughout the country, the spirit of which was evocatively presented in a subsequent publication of public views. (Task Force on Canadian Unity, 1979) Despite the wide-ranging nature of this inquiry, however, those appearing before it were a self-selected group, as were those appearing before the subsequent Macdonald Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada. Even in the unlikely event public participation

in such inquiries were to become more frequent and wide ranging, their lack of direct impact on policy discourages sustained public interest in them and fails to motivate political education.

The institutions of representative democracy just outlined have not successfully involved the general public in the decision-making process. As a result, the Canadian public feels cut off from government. Measures of political efficacy, the feeling one can influence the political system, taken at the time of the 1984 National Election Study mirror previous findings. (Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc and Pammett, 1984:39) They show that 60 per cent of adult Canadians do not think the federal government cares much what they think, 61 per cent feel they have no say in what the federal government does, and 72 per cent believe those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people. Similar questions about provincial politics yield similar results. There is little reason to believe that increased education about policy options can proceed in the face of these attitudes.

Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy is the direct involvement of citizens at large in decision-making. Its justification stems from a different stream of democratic thought than does representative democracy, being based on the ideas of Rousseau, Mill, Jefferson, Dewey and Cole rather than on Hobbes, Locke, Bentham and Burke. (Pateman, 1970; Scaff, 1975) This conception of participation is based, not on taking part in a struggle for competitive advantage, but on an assumption that all citizens are engaged in a shared search for the common good, and need to cooperate in trying to achieve it. It requires values, not just of cooperation, but of mutual respect and tolerance for fellow participants. Above all, it requires activity and commitment on the part of the citizenry in general, and it requires institutions that allow the translation of these deliberations into actual decisions.

Suggested institutional mechanisms for public participation span a wide range of proposals, and it is not possible here to give a detailed plan, but only illustrative examples. Several proposals involve the basic notion of filling offices by lot rather than through election or appointment. Selection by lot is, of course, an ancient technique dating back to the Athenian polis. It was designed to serve several purposes, chief among them the maximization of opportunities to participate and the minimization of the likelihood of oligarchic control. It is significant that modern democratic states have not entirely abandoned the use of the lot – it still exists in the institution of the jury. It has been suggested that community assemblies could be chosen on this basis, with obligations of service imposed along the model of the jury. (Barber, 1984; Burnheim, 1985) While such an

assembly might not be given total decision-making power, and specialized offices filled in other ways, its existence would provide a powerful motive for political education of the general public.

Another prominent series of suggestions in the contemporary literature of participatory democracy has involved ways of engendering extensive consultation of the mass public on policy alternatives. Sensitive to criticisms of single public opinion polls as inadequate for this purpose, techniques involving several rounds of opinion sampling of the same respondents have been developed. These methods give the group results of the previous wave of interviewing, and thus a chance to revise their thoughts. (Glenn, 1978) The most elaborate and effective of these techniques has been the Televote system used in Hawaii in 1978 in conjunction with a Constitutional Convention, and in New Zealand in 1981 for a study by the Commission for the Future, an agency of the New Zealand government. (Becker and Slaton, 1981; Becker, Clement, McRobie and Murphy, 1981) The method is to select a random sample of the population through the generation of a random digit dialing list. The sample is then contacted by phone and asked to participate; those agreeing are mailed an information package containing information about, and discussion of, several policy options, and a questionnaire. When they have completed the questionnaire, the respondents are asked to call in their results. In the New Zealand case, which dealt with a national debate over "alternative futures" for the country, extensive publicity was given to the whole enterprise, with all newspapers publishing the brochure, and numerous discussions organized around the issues. Response rates, and general interest, are reported to have been high.

A more controversial suggestion for public participation in decision-making has involved the use of interactive communications technology to allow instantaneous public feedback on issues and participation from home in council deliberations or public forums. Such systems, utilizing cable television networks, have been the subjects of experiments in the United States with the QUBE system. The experiments generate enthusiasm, and enhance desires to participate among those fortunate enough to have access to them. (Hollander, 1981) In Canada, the TELIDON system has not been developed for this purpose, though the technical capacity may exist to do so. (Department of Communications, 1983) Bell Northern Research developed a VOTAPHONE in the 1970s, which used the telephone system to permit voting choices or expressions of public opinion on designated questions. (Pergler, 1980) It seems likely that the development of such interactive techniques will proceed slowly in the absence of decisions to implement some of them.

There was some initial interest in this subject by the Department of Communications, but an early conference recommending increased research on the ways in which communications technology could increase public participation (Department of Communications, 1971) was not followed up. In the late 1970s, the C.B.C. developed a series of programs called "Talking Back" in which communities were linked by satellite for discussion (Pergler, 1980) but this experiment has not been repeated. Although a number of the presentations to the major conference held by the Institute for Research on Public Policy in 1979 on the subject of citizen involvement in government did recommend increases in such participation, a summary of the views of the participants concluded, "No one, so far as I have heard, has suggested any departure from the basic nature of representative government." (Kent, 1981:33)

Participatory democracy requires an educated, informed public. But such a public will not emerge in Canada until there is a general conviction that the effort and time put into education would be worthwhile. Some initial experimentation in institutional reform needs to be done to initiate the process. The implementation of participatory institutions must be gradual, and they might never replace representative institutions. But they must be encouraged to develop, allowed to co-exist with current structures, and be respected by representative elites, if there is to be any meaningful rise in the level of political education in Canada. The payoff would be twofold – better informed citizens, and better decisions.

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Chapter 19:

Public Information and Government Secrecy

Terence H. Qualter

Censorship, or "information control," manifests itself in many ways. The conventional imagery of the censor at work suggests blank spaces in a newspaper, or a mutilated film. But if the meaning of censorship is extended to any prior effort to prevent the publication or distribution of facts, ideas or opinions, imagination and ingenuity know no bounds. Here, however, I am concerned with only one facet of information control: official secrecy – the deliberate concealing or withholding, by government agencies, of information that might be of concern to the public. (See Qualter, 1985.)

The first rule of government secrecy is to keep secret the level of government secrecy. Most Western governments operate on the principle that as long as the people don't even know there is a secret they are unlikely to probe its content. Governments are able to operate secretly because few have any conception of how much information is kept from them. Modern governments are instinctively inclined to widen the area of secrecy, to keep to themselves everything they are not forced to disclose. Virtually all governments believe that the public ought to be told no more than it needs to know, and only they are qualified to determine what the people need to know. The common attitude is that the public's business is of no concern to the public. The guiding principle in Canada, as elsewhere, has been one of discretionary secrecy – all government files are closed, except those the government chooses to open.

There is always a quite proper, unarguable, case for withholding some information. The task is to find an acceptable balance between what the public is entitled to know and what the government is entitled to keep secret. In practice the balance is almost everywhere heavily weighted in favour of the government's position. The traditional media view is that responsible, informed publication is more than a right; it is a duty. Governments, on the other hand, having a high opinion of their own wisdom and nobility of purpose, are not inclined to make public anything tarnishing that self-perception. This poses a very real problem. In any government, anywhere, there will be from time to time instances of gross incompetence, bad judgement and corruption. In an open society in peacetime, there is some possibility that these things will be exposed and perhaps corrected. In the United States, far more open than Canada or Britain in these respects, we have the example of the public investigations of the Watergate scandal, the space shuttle disaster, and the 1986 Iranian-Contra arms deals. The threat of publicity may even reduce the incidence of corruption or malfeasance.

The expansion of government activities, especially in the realm of national defence, has increased the opportunities for government secrecy. The climate of Cold War hostilities and superpower confrontations has given added encouragement and justification to the censors. National security has become an all-too-easy response for those resisting demands for more public information. The nation's defence arrangements, its intelligence and counter-espionage operations, are, after all, quite properly secret matters. In the atmosphere of wartime or cold war hysteria, it is easy to argue that criticism and exposure should be silenced because they may weaken confidence or give comfort to enemies. In practice, however, it is difficult to determine the appropriate boundary between the legitimate exposure of political, administrative or military incompetence or failure, designed to correct or prevent the repetition of those errors, and disloyal opposition which may destabilize the system, threaten its security or undermine its morale. But the price to be paid for protecting morale may be the continuation of the incompetence or the immunity of the corrupt.

Apart from national security, government secrecy is often justified under a broad umbrella called "the public interest." Certain things are quire properly to be kept secret. Great harm could be done by the advance publication of budget proposals. Negotiations in industrial disputes, or dealings between nations, might be adversely affected by too much publicity. Hypothetical or "worst case" situation papers, presented to Cabinet, could cause intolerable harm if published as active policy considerations. The broad principles of cabinet government and ministerial responsibility appear to add

further credibility to the secrecy argument. It is widely alleged that the permanent civil service can be expected freely to offer the government of the day impartial advice only if it is protected by complete anonymity. The cornerstone of British administrative theory, which Canadians have inherited, is that any unauthorized disclosure of administrative action is prejudicial to good government.

Official secrecy is a deeply entrenched tradition in Canadian government, as part of our inheritance from Britain. Sir Lionel Heald, one-time Attorney General in Britain, described the sweep of the British Official Secrets Act, which, he said, "makes it a crime, without any possibility of defence, to report the number of cups of tea consumed per week in a government department, or the details of a new carpet in the minister's room." (*The Times*, March 20, 1970.) Section 4 of the Canadian *Official Secrets Act* is very similar in intent to the all-embracing character of the British legislation, treating all government information, classified or not, as secret. Mark MacGuigan said in Parliament of Section 4 that it "is so sweeping that it is almost difficult to conceive that in strict law any minister or public servant could lawfully communicate any significant information.... This is the broadest possible language imaginable." (Hansard, 1978: 6251.)

Obsessive bureaucratic secrecy is a manifestation of an elitist culture. Any more or less isolated ruling class falls easily into an attitude of superiority, unable to accept that ordinary people have the capacity to rule themselves. Those in power feel under no obligation to explain themselves to the lower orders, who would "not understand" and who are better off not being troubled by matters that don't really concern them. Although carried further in Britain than in other liberal democracies, this implicit elitism is present wherever the censor is at work. To the government, and particularly to the permanent bureaucrat, there are really two sorts of people in society. There are those with the strength of character to cope with bad news, the moral fibre to watch obscene movies without harm, or rationally equipped to understand and to respond calmly to unfavourable reports, on the one hand, and on the other, there are the many who must be protected from what will disturb, confuse, or demoralize them. The assumption is that the people should accept that, as their rulers all are honourable people, they should be content to trust in their wisdom and discretion.

In Canada this elitism is further manifested in what J.P. Johnston described as *technocracy*—"... the theory and practice whereby politics is confined to various sorts of experts and specialists." (Johnston, 1985:117.) This "disposition toward technocracy", common to both Canada and the United States, by widening the gap between the governors and the governed, further

enfeebles our democratic institutions. People are improperly "kept in the dark about matters bearing importantly on their interests, aspirations, and ideals." (Johnston, 1985:118.) It is an attitude manifested at all levels of bureaucracy. A report in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* (November 22, 1986) described how the Toronto Public Health Department kept secret information about restaurants found guilty of health violations. A spokesman for the department was quoted as saying: "We don't think that it is our function to drag up these things . . . We don't think it is helpful to us and we don't think it is helpful to the restauranteurs and we don't think it is helpful to the public." No official secrets were involved. It was simply a case of bureaucrats deciding what the public should be allowed to know.

Within a bureaucracy there are also certain symbolic values attached to secrecy. In a world of secrecy, information becomes a treasured possession, a symbol of status and authority, and a confirmation of superior position. Officials advance their own importance by letting it be known that they are the possessors of privileged information. This is why official secrecy is never watertight, as those with secret information are under a strong inclination to demonstrate their status by revealing their secrets. Ruling elites know that information increases power, and beyond this, that possession of secrets also confirms status, which further enhances power. Ruling elites have thus always resisted the dissemination of information. In earlier ages the ruling classes opposed the extension of literacy to the masses, and earlier still the Church opposed the shift of the written language from Latin to the vernacular because both of these transformations opened information to new classes, so undermining the privileges of the few.

In the past couple of decades in the Western democracies, increasing pressure for more openness in government has resulted in some major concessions. The traditional arguments for administrative secrecy are under new challenge. Each revelation of important matters kept from the public arouses further curiosity about what else might be hidden. "Open government" has become a fashionable rallying cry. Old arrangements are increasingly condemned as paternalistic, out of touch with demands for more citizen involvement in democracy. There is a new sense of citizens' rights to know how they are governed. Even those most opposed to the disclosure of any official information about what the government is actually doing, must now profess to believe in a more open administration. Throughout, however, the burden of proof has been placed on the reformers. Where secrecy has been the norm, a case must be made for each individual departure from that norm. It must be accepted that where traditions of secrecy are deeply entrenched, mere changes in the law will not immediately result in the transformation of practice.

As it affects Canada today, official secrecy manifests itself in two main areas. First, there are the secrets the government preserves about its own operations. Secrecy in matters of policy information is defined as "anything contained in government files that contributes to the making of a government decision, including any decision relating to the enactment of either legislation or regulation or both." (Gall; 1985.) Here the long-standing tradition, only now coming under some attack, is one of closed files. The public may know only what the government chooses to tell it. The Canadian *Access to Information Act*, which came into effect in 1983, attempts to open up the procedure. It entitles members of the public to request certain categories of information from government offices, and includes rules for the speedy provision of that information at reasonable cost. Not everything the government does, however, is now automatically open to the public. Cabinet documents and anything else referring to, or flowing from Cabinet documents, are exempt, as are all matters relating to national defence, national security, or criminal proceedings. The legislation still lags in its openness behind that current in the United States, and that which has existed in Sweden for generations. Nevertheless, it is a huge advance on the past, and puts Canada far ahead of the United Kingdom.

The second great area concerns the information the government gathers about private persons. The principle here is entirely reversed. While I cannot demand to be told all that the government is doing, it is apparently able to investigate and record virtually every detail of my private affairs. Again subject to some recent, and still largely untested, changes in the law, the government does not have to have my approval to collect information about me, nor does it have to reveal to me what its records say about me. Yet without access to what the government thinks it knows about me, I cannot correct any false information, or misleading interpretations of incomplete facts. In Canada, right of access to information about oneself, which broadened after about 1978, is now governed by the 1982 *Privacy Act*. There are also other pieces of federal and provincial legislation which offer some protection to individual privacy. The new legislation provides for an Index of federal government data banks and gives individuals the right to apply to a given data collection for information about themselves. There are, of course, exemptions by which governments may withhold information in certain categories, including national security and criminal proceedings. The details of these various rights of individuals and governments go beyond the scope of this paper.

Official secrecy is also an obstacle to academic research and the compilation of an accurate historical record. It is therefore a major impediment to further public education. While at one time official documents were locked away almost indefinitely, most governments

now provide for the opening of public archives after some fixed period, seldom less than about thirty years, with provisions that any particularly "sensitive" material may be kept much longer. Issues once highly sensitive may be kept secret long after those likely to be embarrassed by their disclosure have died. Not only does this mean that important information about our past is kept hidden far beyond the point where its disclosure could cause any public harm, it also means that misinformation, misunderstandings, or misinterpretations of past events cannot be corrected until the correction no longer matters.

To a large extent, even the processes of government remain a closely guarded secret, making it elaborately difficult for ordinary citizens to find out precisely how they are governed. As long as much of the internal operation of Cabinet remains veiled in secrecy, even the most thorough of Political Science textbooks must give an inadequate account. Much of what is written is founded more on intelligent speculation and conjecture, perhaps supported by unverifiable revelations from private sources, than on properly documented data. "One should be aware that much important information about the *modus operandi* of the executive is shrouded in mystery. Important parliamentary traditions, as well as such legal devices as the *Official Secrets Act* have, for the most part, shielded the executive from penetrating scrutiny by the press or the public." (Jackson, Jackson and Baxter-Moore, 1986:254.) We cannot expect a politically educated public if the "textbooks," the detailed accounts of what administrations do, and how they do it, remain closed.

When not only governments, but boards, councils and committees of enquiry conduct their affairs in private, refusing even to announce the results of their deliberations, they may be imposing an undesirable, self-defeating level of information control. Democratic government depends on responsible voter behaviour, which in turn depends on an informed public opinion. Yet opinions cannot be informed when too much official information is kept secret. In fact, any large measure of government secrecy is incompatible with the concept of democracy. D.C. Rowat argued that this was true, first because secrecy leads to distrust and fear of government, and second because people cannot control their government without adequate knowledge. Even opposition MPs don't always know what to ask about because they don't know what is hidden. (Rowat, 1965.)

Herein lies the principal evil of excessive official secrecy. Apart from any other consideration, there are serious practical consequences for the operation of a democracy. Administrative secrecy which attempts to control opinion by concealing embarrassing information, represents an admission by the authorities that they do not trust the people. All our self-styled democratic governments still persist in

denying people access to most of the information necessary for proper accountability. But a democracy becomes a sham if public opinion is based only on what the government chooses to make public. If there is really a democratic principle that the people are entitled to participate in the decision-making process, they must have some access to the information necessary for intelligent judgement.

There is, however, a cautionary consideration. There is no great evidence that the public at large is clamoring for more political information. Those who have so far taken the greatest advantage of the new access to information legislation have, for the most part, been investigative journalists, academic researchers, and lawyers. The public, largely indifferent, gives little time to, and has only casual interest in, public affairs. There is much popular rhetoric on the desirability of greater popular participation in the political process. But if participation is to mean anything at all, not only must governments open access to the relevant information, the citizens themselves must actively seek out that information and be prepared to discuss it rationally. There is no convincing evidence that the great majority are inclined to do either. For most,. politics is a marginal concern, to be fitted in with such other activities as working, watching TV hockey, raising children, and so on. Improving access to official files will not, therefore, of itself enhance democracy by producing a more informed electorate. The elite rule, not only by reason of their own ambitions and manipulative skills, but also by reason of the indifference of the many.

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Chapter 20:

Political Education for Participant Citizenship: Implications for the Schools

Ken Osborne

Canadian schools have traditionally been intended to teach citizenship and, for this reason, virtually everything they do is a form of political education. Codes of behaviour, disciplinary practices, school and classroom organization, even teaching methods – all carry politically relevant messages about what it means to be a good citizen. Thus, it is important to see political education in the schools as something which is much broader than the teaching of politics. The problems of political education will not be solved simply by inserting more political science or history into the curriculum.

The evidence is overwhelming that, whether they have intended to do so or not, the schools have taught a version of citizenship which has resulted in passivity and powerlessness, rather than participation and efficacy. That this is so is the result of two interlocking forces: one, the schools' refusal to give students an active and effective voice in their own education and, two, their concentration on teaching, not politics, but civics.

Civics, as conventionally taught, contains some serious weaknesses. First, in its concentration upon the structure and institutions of government, it often ignores the dynamics and processes of politics. Second, it concentrates on the ideal rather than the reality, on what is supposed to happen, rather than what actually does happen. Third, it ignores the role of conflict in politics or, when it does not ignore it, condemns it as harmful and undesirable. Fourth, it encourages spectatorism by seeing the informed voter as the only model of

citizenship and ignoring other forms of political involvement and participation. Fifth, it avoids political controversy and debate and tries to keep current issues out of the classroom. Sixth, it makes little or no attempt to connect the world of politics with the world of children, thereby ignoring the opportunity to make politics meaningful and interesting to students. Seventh, it ignores the fact that classrooms and schools themselves are political milieus for children, who will therefore learn about politics from how they are taught as well as from what they are taught.

Civics, then, must be replaced by a genuinely political education, if the schools are to produce informed, participating citizens. The curriculum must embrace the real world of political issues; teaching methods must demonstrate and encourage appropriate kinds of behaviour; and schools and classrooms must embody in their organization the values of participation and empowerment. These conditions can be stated as criteria for the implementation of a political education which is intended to produce political literacy and competence. A satisfactory approach to political education should meet these conditions:

1. *It should give students a view of the political process as a whole, rather than only some particular slice of it.* Some knowledge of political institutions and the structure of government is essential but not sufficient. At the same time, students should know not only the machinery of government, but how it actually works.

2. *It should give students knowledge and skills which will be transferable and generalizable.* One of the most fundamental problems of political education is that it is inevitably oriented to the future. What students are learning now will bear fruit in the future and since students are often oriented to the present, it may not be easy for them to see the point or importance of what they are being asked to learn. This tendency is reinforced by the obvious fact that most students who learn about politics are not yet adult citizens, nor indeed does politics have a particularly important place among their personal interests and concerns. A useful analogy is that of the mathematics teacher who teaches students skills which they can use to unravel problems they have never seen before. For example, once students have learned to solve quadratic equations they can solve equations they have not yet encountered; they have learned a problem-solving method. Given the obvious reality that students during their adult lives will face political issues that the school cannot anticipate, what can political education do to prepare them? Are there any problem-solving methods that might be useful? Political education must be organized so that students can transfer what

they learn to situations that their teachers cannot anticipate. This is the problem of transferability or generalizability.

3. *Political education should be organized around a few key concepts.* Concepts provide a partial answer to the problem of transferability, in the sense that they provide keys which can help students to understand any political process or issue, whether new or familiar. Key concepts are conflict, power, decision-making, and political action. This is obviously a very brief list and it could be much more fully elaborated. It also omits some concepts which others might consider important. Nonetheless, it is important to keep concepts as few as possible, not to make elaborate distinctions, and to choose concepts which students can understand and which have the power to pull together a lot of related ideas. Simply put, the argument is this: politics begins with a problem or a conflict in which people act in order to reach or influence decisions, which are made by those with power to make them and which, once made, often give rise to further conflict and action. This view is easily understood by students, is easily transferable and incorporates many related concepts, such as authority, law, justice and so on.

4. *Political education should encompass issues.* Issues are important for both pedagogical and philosophical reasons. They provide at least a partial answer to the problem of how to motivate students. They are here-and-now; they lend themselves to the use of radio, television and newspapers in the classroom; they often affect the lives of students or those close to them; being unresolved and contemporary, they are easier for students to discuss; and, since teachers do not know the answers, they can put teachers and students on a more equal footing in the classroom. They are ideal "grabbers,": helping to attract students' interest and attention so that lessons can become more rewarding and effective. They are also the very stuff of politics; they embody conflict and contradiction; they spur people to action. Perhaps the central test for any political system is how satisfactorily it deals with the issues that confront it. In short, one simply cannot teach politics (though one can teach 'civics') without issues. At the same time, issues alone are not enough. Today's issues may be dead and gone tomorrow or the day after, and simply to teach students about them may do nothing to prepare them for the future. What is needed is a method of examining today's issues which can be applied to the issues, as yet unknown, which will arise in the future.

5. *Any approach to political education must be understandable to students.* This is an obvious criterion, but one that can

sometimes be overlooked in the process of curriculum development which can get carried away by the search for intellectually complete theoretical frameworks, in which distinctions are elaborated, themes and sub-themes are detailed, every possible objection is anticipated until it becomes too sophisticated for students to understand or teachers to use. There is a line to be drawn in political education between what is satisfactory to the political scientist or the educational philosopher and what is viable in the classroom. The line is never hard and fast and it will be drawn in different places by different people, but the criterion must be not whether materials will satisfy the academic critic but whether students can understand them – and not just the "best" students but all students, since democratic political education cannot be confined to only a selected few. This does not mean ignoring the views of political scientists and philosophers, and it certainly does not mean teaching a view of politics that is either wrong or unacceptable. The concern is to simplify, so that students can understand what they are being taught. This also means taking notice of the work of Piaget, Peel and others – and of their critics – and realizing that politics is full of abstractions, while students often think very concretely. Politics generally demands (even if it does not always get) what Peel calls "explainer" and Piaget "formal operational" thought. Political discussion is laden with abstract terms which many students find difficult to understand, and it often hinges upon complex concepts. It becomes even more complicated when these concepts have to be weighed against each other. Thus it is important to ensure that political education is conducted in ways that are not beyond students' capacities.

6. *Any approach to political education must be interesting to students.* Not only should students be able to understand what they are learning about politics, they should also find it interesting. At present, many students do not find politics particularly interesting, in large part because it does not hold a high position in their personal lives. The problem is compounded by the dullness of traditional civics. Since it is reasonable to assume that students learn best when they are interested in what they are learning, it makes obvious sense to look for ways of teaching politics that will interest students. One must broaden the definition of politics so that it includes much more than government and so that students see the operation of power, conflict, decision-making and other concepts in a wide variety of settings. For young students, for example, the classroom is the political arena they know best. It is there that they experience

the operation of power and authority; learn to accept or to challenge the rules; learn how or how not to work with others; and acquire a thousand other politically relevant understandings. The task of political education, in pedagogical terms, is to use such everyday contexts as classrooms, schools, community clubs and the rest, as examples of political systems and to move from this basis to the broader regional, national and international arena. This politics of everyday life, taught through stories, case studies, personal experiences and other concrete and tangible forms, is a powerful teaching device, which has not been fully taken advantage of in most approaches to political education.

7. *Any approach to political education must take heed of the fact that students learn powerful political messages from how they are taught as well as from what they are taught.* This criterion, of course, raises the issue of the "hidden curriculum" or the "curriculum-as-experienced" and one needs to take seriously the research that indicates that what teachers think they are teaching is not necessarily what students are learning. The position can be simply stated: if political education is intended to make students critical and active, this must be reflected in both the materials to be studied and the way in which they are used in the classroom. Thus, case studies and stories should show children and adults actively involved in grappling with political issues in ways that go beyond voting in elections. Such materials must also be left deliberately open-ended so that students will be stimulated to think their way into them and decide for themselves what should be done. They should be written in such a way that they demand an inquiry-based teaching style which encourages student involvement and participation in the classroom. Finally, they should be written so as to encourage teachers and students to become involved in political issues outside the classroom. In political education, as in most other things, one learns by doing as well as by studying.

8. *Political education should encourage the disposition to become involved and active in the political process and should teach the appropriate skills.* Levels of political involvement are very low and they correlate highly with social class. In addition, many adults feel alienated from or cynical about, not just politicians, but the whole political process. It is safe to assume that this state of affairs, in part, results from misdirected approaches to political education in the schools, although this is obviously only one component of a much larger problem. To correct this means ensuring that classroom materials portray children and adults

engaging in many forms of political activity, that teaching strategies themselves encourage participation and autonomy, and that students are encouraged to become involved in a political issue at either a local or a national level.

9. *Political education must be manageable in the classroom.* Curriculum innovations often place unrealistic demands upon already hard-pressed teachers, who have neither the time, the training nor the resources to implement innovations effectively. This problem becomes even more pressing where teachers are also under external pressures for accountability, for testing and other measures of school "effectiveness." In particular, one cannot ignore these constraints: first, most teachers have no background or training in political science and therefore will be unfamiliar with the approaches described in this article; second, many teachers think in terms of traditional civics rather than newer approaches to political education; third, some teachers, and some people outside the schools, see anything smacking of "politics" as too controversial for the classroom; and, fourth, there are few courses in the schools specifically in politics; instead it is a matter of units or topics in other courses, especially in history and social studies.

Thus, any attempt to change political education must come to grips with difficult questions of teacher training and re-training. Not only must materials be compatible with the constraints and realities of the classroom, they must also be understood by and make sense to the teachers who will use them. It is especially important to overcome the entrenched notion that politics or civics is the responsibility of the history or social studies teachers and to implant the recognition that political education is, in reality, taught by all teachers and, less obviously, by the very structures and practices of the school itself.

Educational theorists are notorious for their liking for grand philosophy and their reluctance to concern themselves with detail, and it might be useful to see what these nine criteria mean in practice, by examining the work of the Winnipeg-based Political Education Project, which has produced materials for use by both teachers and students, focussing particularly on the politics of everyday life and emphasizing political participation and efficacy.

At the high school level, the Project looked for issues that high school students would see as occurring within their own lives and which would also raise substantive political questions, and selected two, one involving a community club series of teenage dances which threatened to get out of hand, and another which involved school closings and reorganization leading to transfers of students, and which had actually occurred in the local community. Students work

through these two issues, one in the form of a simulation, encountering the concepts of conflict, action, power and decision-making. After this is done, they are introduced to another issue, in the form of a case study, but this time selected from the adult world of politics. The issue of freedom of the press is used both for its intrinsic importance and because it can be expected to have some impact on students. Once this is completed, the students are taught a procedure for analyzing political issues and are presented with two newspaper articles which they have never seen before and asked to analyze them.

Throughout, the teaching strategy that is emphasized, indeed that the material requires, is that of inquiry, in which the students are actively engaged in looking for answers, in assessing possible courses of action, in seeking ways to deal with conflict and, above all, in realizing that politics involve the combination of power, conflict, decision-making and action.

At the elementary level, dealing with students of about eleven years of age, the Project took a slightly different approach. Again, stories and case studies are the preferred vehicle. The students first read a story about a classroom in which students are given the choice of deciding how to spend a future Friday afternoon. Not only can they not readily agree what to do but, when they do finally make a choice, it provokes opposition in some sections of the community, thus causing problems for the school and putting the students in the middle of a political storm. Having worked through this, the students then look at another story which describes children and parents trying to save a playground from the road-building plans of the local council. A final story centers on students, but also involves the community and all segments of the political system in a problem of water pollution. All the stories are deliberately left open-ended, so that no easy solutions are provided, and this has proved to be an effective teaching strategy. It creates a certain frustration among students, who want to know "what happened," but not so much that they give up or lose interest. In fact, the reverse happens and the unresolved ending proves to be a good stimulant to discussion. Further, all the stories are written in such a way that, as with the secondary school materials, the students are actively involved in their own learning. It is next to impossible to use these materials in a didactic, expository way.

At both elementary and secondary levels, the materials end with suggestions and directions for studying and becoming involved in a political problem in the "real world," either at a local or the national level. This has proved to be the most sensitive part of the material, with most teachers proving to be often unwilling to take their students this far, although there has been a certain amount of letter writing to politicians and newspapers, of doing research projects on

local issues, of arranging for guest speakers, question-and-answer sessions and the like.

In all this, the Project is part of the renewed interest and activity that has begun to influence political education in recent years. From their very beginning, schools have had a political purpose: their mandate is to train citizens, in the widest sense of that term. Nonetheless, the recent interest in political education represents something new. It is trying to define – or redefine – more precisely the nature of citizenship, with particular emphasis upon the citizen as active, autonomous participant in the political process, and it is suggesting ways in which the schools can more effectively contribute to the goal of educating citizens for democracy.

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Political education is the teaching, in formal and informal ways, by numerous agents, and the learning of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for political participation. The state of Canadian political education today, say many of the authors in this volume, is inadequate.

This volume has its origins in a Conference on Political Education in Canada organized in February, 1987 under the auspices of the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Institute Fellow Jean-Luc Pepin brought together a wide array of participants from academia, government, journalism, business and the professions for a memorable two-day meeting. The chapters of this book are revised versions of papers originally presented at the conference. In addition, some of the discussion, reactions and spontaneous presentations have been retained in the form of edited commentaries.

This book provides information on the state of Canadian political education, and on the performance of such agents as the schools, mass media, and political parties. Issues of public policy are raised, and a number of recommendations are presented.

Jon H. Pammett is Professor of Political Science at Carleton University, Ottawa, and Jean-Luc Pepin is Fellow-in-Residence at the IRPP and Visiting Professor of Political Science at the University of Ottawa.

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